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The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is the publication of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. Organized in 1997, the Evangelical Homiletics Society is an academic society established for the exchange of ideas related to the instruction of biblical preaching. The purpose of the Society is to advance the cause of biblical preaching through the promotion of a biblical-theological approach to preaching; to increase competence for teachers of preaching; to integrate the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology; to make scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics.

Statement of Faith: The Evangelical Homiletics Society affirms the Statement of Faith affirmed by the National Association of Evangelicals. It reads as follows:

1. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

2. We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

4. We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

5. We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

6. We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

7. We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS

SCOTT M. GIBSON
General Editor

This edition begins with the question: "What is the future of evangelical homiletics." Several homileticians provided input on their sense of the long-range perspective of homiletics. Their insights are interesting. The forum helps those of us who preach and teach preaching to reflect on the developments, concerns, and hopes in our field. Readers will be stimulated by the reflections of both younger and more seasoned colleagues.

The first article is by British scholar and homiletician Derek Tidball. His analysis explores the matter of preaching and personality. Tidball's insightful article offers an overview of the development of this topic and explores the impact of personality on preaching.

The next article by Karen L.H. Shaw of Arab Baptist Theological Seminary examines a familiar text—Proverbs 31:10-31—and surveys how it has been typically preached by preachers. Shaw engages the interpretations of the text and challenges readers to reconsider the role of the passage in the wider canon of Scripture.

The third article on the nature of prophetic genre and the way in which prophetic texts are to be preached is offered by Ken Langley pastor in Zion, Illinois and adjunct professor of preaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and the 2013-2014 president of the Evangelical Homiletics Society. Langley investigates the notion that all prophecy is conditional. His article will stimulate readers in their assumptions about prophetic literature.

The final article is by student scholar Jonathan Downie of Edinburgh, Scotland. His insightful article explores the matter of interpreting sermons—the important considerations of translating multilingual sermons in an ever-growing multicultural world. Understanding sermon interpreting as part of the sermon process is key to appreciating the homiletical process. Readers will gain appreciation for an ever-growing reality in our churches and seminaries.

The classic sermon in this edition is by G. Campbell Morgan. A reminder of the heart of preaching—the gospel—is what we want to remember as our foundation and as we look to the future.

A well-rounded book review section is provided for our readers as members and other reviewers explore the textured ways in which homiletics is expressed in published books. We are grateful for our reviewers and for the solid work of our book review editor, Abe Kuruvilla.

The richness of this edition of the *Journal* demonstrates an strong present and a promising future for our field. As Don Sunukjian of Talbot

School of Theology of Biola University notes in his reflection on the future of evangelical homiletics:

> I think the future of evangelical homiletics is robust, exciting and unlimited. Our leading evangelical schools are committed to biblical preaching that is both true to the flow of the text and connected to contemporary life. The best preachers in pulpits and on websites are evangelicals, and the next generation promises to carry on wonderfully.

The future is bright because we preach the gospel. As a society we are committed to doing just that—and we intend to preach Christ and teach others to do the same till the Lord returns.

HOMILETICS FORUM: THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS

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When I think about the future of homiletics, as distinct from the future of preaching, I am thinking about the way that we encourage excellence in the preaching that is done. As a homiletician, I am charged with thinking deeply about the nature of preaching and how to go about helping others grow more effective in their practice of their calling. This leads me, then, to two key thoughts. The first will be about the way we conceive of preaching, and the second will be about the way by which might develop people for this work in the near future.

As to our conception of preaching, I would say that the future will demand us to be far more integrative. Preaching that merely instructs, or which solely engages, will not be satisfying to people who are no longer compelled by culture or tradition to listen to our sermons. Of course, the Scriptures themselves are full of examples of preachers who were careful not only to offer teaching, but also to tell stories, to paint pictures, and to offer prayers. The preaching of the prophets, the apostles, and of Jesus himself, were rich with metaphor, object lessons, and expressive language. Think, for one example, of Jeremiah's belt. They were varied in their forms utilizing narrative, poetry, didactic teaching and so much more. The preachers of the Bible located their preaching in life. They were pleased to offer abstract theological thought, but they were always careful to root what they had to say in the real experience of their listeners.

Today we hear a lot of hard-core exegetical and theological preaching and I am grateful for it. I believe we needed a return to biblical rootedness and a deeper approach to the word of God. I would like to think that the future, then, could retain this depth, while seeking for broader and more integrated expressions of these truths. If we could do this, we could take our preaching to another level of impact.

As to the development of preachers, I believe we the future is going to be a lot more context-based. Actually, I think that all of theological education is moving in this direction. At my own seminary, we have embraced a fully mastery-model, outcomes-based to pastoral development, including the development of preachers.

What this means is that preaching will be proved more in the church

than in the classroom. There will be room for us to discuss theory and to teach technique, but increasingly, this will be done through mentoring in place. Preachers will have to show that they can actually help people hear from God in the context of their ministries instead of only satisfying their professors in the security of the classroom.

This change is going to challenge the identity of some of us classroom teachers. I think we are in danger of having found our meaning more in our positions and our systems than in our callings. If we could free ourselves to think theologically about the outcomes we have been called to pursue, we might do a lot of things differently in the future and we might be more effective.

THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL PREACHING

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It is not that they would not; it may be that they could not. Who can hear cognitive, linear and discursive exposition today? For those of us whose early heroes were Campbell Morgan, Lloyd-Jones or other expository paragons the contemporary shift in the congregation's ability to hear even lightweight exposition jars us. In a device obsessed world everyone has some ADD and some have all of it. The challenge for biblical preachers rests not so much in their ability to say it as in the ability of a congregation to hear it.

The location of the sermon has shifted from the preacher's mouth to the hearer's ear. The day calls not so much for getting it said as getting it heard. What the future holds for evangelical preaching can only be anticipated in several trajectories.

Preachers will image-in preaching. Developing biblical images will capture the attention of image-saturated hearers. The Facebook congregation thinks in images and conceives in pictures. If the preacher wants the church to hear Psalm 46 the preacher will need to describe fortresses or, better still, safe rooms in houses today. If the preacher desires to describe the alabaster box of pure nard the preacher had best talk about the most expensive perfume manufactured today. Stretching the image, exploring the contemporary equivalent, arguing from the lesser to the greater, the lower to the higher, will mark preaching that gets heard.

If you are going to preach about a great cloud of witnesses you will need to start with the most recent use of the cloud metaphor, The Cloud, where our information is stored and then move to the information stored in that Hebrews 12:1 cloud of witnesses. Call it www.hebrews12.1.1.nt. If you start in the Roman Coliseum explaining togas and tunics you had just as well start on Mars.

Another way to connect is anachronistic exposition, using today's language to speak of biblical events. David sends a text message to Bathsheba, "Happy hour at the palace, 5:00 p.m. Dress business casual." She sends a text back in a month with a word about Davy's new baby. Most congregants have enough imagination. Trust them. One out of a hundred will grasp your hand at the church door and say, "I didn't know they had texting back them." Just tell them, "Bless your heart" (that is what we say in the Southwest) when

folks cannot discern the obvious. Do not let other people's lack of creativity kill yours.

Preachers had also best not belabor the point or drop anchor in the rhetorical seme. The laborious, repetitive preaching that restates the obvious six ways will face emptier pews. If a sermon movement used to last four to five minutes the listener today may visit with one unit of meaning two minutes. It is the difference in a Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall movie and an episode of The Office. In the former the "cameraman" could go on lunch break and be sure that his shot could continue unbroken. In the latter the cinematographer seems to have downed three Red Bulls.

The exhaustive biblical preacher that looks under every noun and parses every verb in the pulpit faces uncomprehending millennials. F.B. Meyer once observed that the art of exposition is the art of elimination. The preacher of the future will have to choose. Good stuff will have to stay in the study. The essence of the passage must be grasped, stated, imaged and done so at a pace hard to imagine a couple of decades ago. This is not your mother's exposition, not less your grandmother's.

Sermons will lean more on organic lived experiences. If you preach about the bread of life you had best garner a great deal of information about the kinds of bread today, the nutritional value of bread in detail and the ubiquity of bread on the planet along with its striking and strange uses. The gratuitous sermon story that has nothing to do with the image being proclaimed will be pronounced cheesy and dismissed. If you are preaching about bread, don't tell a story about a fire truck.

Sermons that promise more than they can deliver will leave people feeling as if you broke some kind of contract. Such boisterous titles as "Seven Inflexible Laws for Christian Business Success" of "Five Timeless Gems for Rearing Godly Children" will be the object of dismissal if not ridicule. The pew is figuring out that the Bible is about God's activities. It is not a manual on successful upper middle class American life. Millennials instinctively push away sermons that promise more than they can possibly deliver.

On the other hand, sermons cannot ooze over the pulpit in a mush of disconnected anecdotes. Some have misunderstood induction or narration as stringing together a series of stories about my parakeet that flew away and came back, uncle Clyde's toupee that fell off at the family reunion and the cutest thing my kid did yesterday. The disconnected potpourri glued to some unfortunate text only leaves the pew wondering what in heaven you are proclaiming. On the one hand, droning on in a linear, cognitive fashion will not work but on the other sheer incoherence won't work either. Dr. Haddon Robinson's Big Idea may have to hidden in the preacher's head but it must at the very least exist there. Sermons ought to have at least one clear idea somewhere.

But what about the exposition of the word of God? The sermon should still be confined to a text that is an expository unit. The sermon must still have as its direct authority the words, phrases and clauses of the text.

We must still understand that limitation gives power and limitation to the text at hand helps empower the sermon. We must expound as much text as the distracted congregation can possibly grasp while recognizing the post-modern inability to focus on anything for very long. It may feel like you are a homiletic fencer: thrust with the Sword and parry. Back away, step forward and thrust again but feint and dodge with an organic lived experience. Then slice with the Sword again. Always believe that the word does its work but the scabbard is a different shape in many ages.

The current fad of video clips in sermons may likely be just that, a seasonal fashion. Remember that most folks thought green refrigerators and power blue bathroom sinks were the wave of the future. They did seem so permanent until they disappeared wherever mauve and teal were laid to rest. Preaching has a long set of minutes. Most of them record words and not film clips. Does the visual have a place in worship? Ask the Catholics with statues and the Orthodox with icons, not to mention smoke and candles. Yes, the visual, olfactory, tactile and the ability to tell sweet from sour all have a place in the liturgy. Supporting cast, however, does better when they recognize they are not Tom Hanks.

Anything else? Preaching is here to stay. Sometimes everything and sometimes nearly nothing, it has always been there. I read as a 60s undergraduate ministerial student that preaching had had its day. I should be ready to conduct psychodramas in the church to come. Folks would not listen to a sermon in the future. This morning I just finished preaching five times at two campuses of a church that gathers primarily to hear biblical exposition. The folks who wrote the obituary of the sermon in the 60s have had their own obituaries but the sermon is here to stay.

PREACHING WITH FIDELITY, PURITY AND SENSITIVITY: THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS

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For years, we, evangelical preachers, have sensed it in the ecclesial atmosphere. Preaching is in a precarious state even in evangelical congregations. We hear the earthly pleas so akin to popular culture which have oozed into our homiletical hemisphere. Many practicing Christians are crying out for preachers to tickle their ears and to serve as worship entertainers, uplifting motivational speakers, and condoners of unbiblical lifestyles. Dare I say that the sacred act of preaching has been commoditized? And we, preachers, for better or worse, have become a commodity. That is, "good" preaching, according to the world's standards, yields more attenders, while "poor" preaching yields emptier pews.

Truth be told, some evangelical preachers are inadvertently sitting on a treacherous roller coaster. They are veering wherever the tracks take them in capitulating to listeners' requests and assisting them in forfeiting their souls. Might there be a completely different homiletical roller coaster that we might ride together as evangelical preachers? In this short conversation starter, I would like to put forward three elements to consider regarding the future of evangelical homiletics. How can we, evangelical preachers, remain faithful to God, His Word, and His people in light of our shifting surroundings?

BIBLICAL FIDELITY

I once worshipped at a large and influential church near the suburbs of Denver, Colorado, where I served as a pastor. Due to the highly biblical reputation of the church, my expectations were lofty regarding this particular evangelical preacher. As I listened to his sermon, the introductory story seemed to go on for an inordinate amount of time. In fact, as I glanced at my watch, the introduction lasted approximately twenty minutes. I kept thinking when he would actually begin to exposit the text which was read toward the beginning of the worship service. Sadly, as the sermon continued, the preacher only remotely referred to the Scripture passage. And the lessons gleaned by the pastor from that text were eisegetical rather than exegetical. He had his own agenda for the message, told a number of stories, and simply tagged on the Scripture passage as a proof text for what he wanted to say.

The sad reality is that as I listen to the sermons prepared by some

of my students, they have been similarly influenced by preachers who are more anecdotal than exegetical. As evangelical preachers and homiletics professors, it is our calling and responsibility to train and perhaps re-train our staff members and students to be biblically vigilant whereby we trust wholeheartedly in the inerrancy of Scripture and rely on the power of the Bible for the sermon's thrust. The future of evangelical homiletics depends on it. Preaching should never be boring. But we must put an end to sloppy and sometimes non-existent exegesis and the incessant stories that serve as poor substitutes for deep, rich exegetical nuggets which require the Spirit's leading and our faithful biblical examination.

THEOLOGICAL PURITY

A second homiletical challenge for the future concerns a commitment to theological purity. As we listen in on sermons preached by some evangelical preachers today, we receive a smattering of both liberal and syncretistic teaching that have traces of post-liberal theology, New Age philosophies, Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Taoism, and moralistic teaching which borders on works righteousness, among others. For example, in one sermon, a preacher encouraged his church members to actively pursue, *dukkha*, the Buddhist understanding of suffering in order to supplement their spiritual disciplines and bring them closer to Christ during Holy Week. This evangelical preacher did not at any point in the message offer any warnings against the dangers of Eastern religious practices. In some shape or form, could it be that some evangelical preachers have become bored with the gospel and have begun tinkering with other religions to be trendy or accommodating? Our radars for theological orthodoxy require fine-tuning as we continue preaching in the twenty-first century to a culture that is increasingly pluralistic and tolerant of other theologies, and religious faiths and practices.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Lastly, as the world becomes progressively globalized, we are witnessing growing racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in many evangelical congregations. The future of evangelical homiletics will also be tested in how we respond to this diversity. Historically, especially North American evangelical preachers have approached their preaching as a color-blind process. We have prepared and preached general, generic sermons that we assume will hit home for everyone listening. This is an assumption that needs revision in response to rising cultural diversity in churches today and into the future. All the more we would be well served to proactively learn about other cultures and how we can most effectively reach listeners who come from a wide spectrum of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Mainline homileticians and preachers have been pioneering this exploration

into preaching with cultural sensitivity. But we want to be the ones leading this charge as evangelical preachers. We want to offer messages of hope that are biblically faithful and also address the cultural and personal needs of marginalized and minority members of our churches.

The future of evangelical homiletics is as the heralded missionary Adoniram Judson once remarked "as bright as the promises of God" but our homiletical luster will depend heavily on our fidelity to God's Word, our robust commitment to evangelical theology, and our determination to be more learned about cultural sensitivity in preaching. While preaching is in a precarious situation today, we do not lose heart for the future. May we work ever more closely together toward this end to be faithful expositors of His Word in this hostile environment being reminded that our Triune God is worth it and, rest assured, is leading us in this charge!

THE NEXT THIRTY-FOUR YEARS? THE MAKING OF THE FUTURE

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I recently had the chance to peruse the third edition (2014) of a standard work on preaching, used as a textbook in a number of evangelical seminaries all over the world. The first edition of the work was dated 1980, so I decided I'd carefully go through the first and third editions, line upon line, precept upon precept, highlighter in hand, to gauge how much had changed in the field of homiletics in thirty-four years.

If you go by the more than a quarter century this book has been in existence, the answer is: "Nothing, really!" And if you go with that trajectory, the question posed by our Editor, "What do you consider to be the future of evangelical homiletics?" has an easy answer: "Nothing, really!" The past will repeat itself, there will be no change—we've arrived!

That can't be, I said to myself. Nothing remains unchanged for over three decades. And, until we get to glory, we will never have arrived!

So on that non-arrival note, I began thinking not of what the future *might* be, but what the future *ought* to be … in 2048.

I see the mighty stream of preaching as having two essential tributaries that feed into it: hermeneutics rhetoric. You might say: hermeneutics + rhetoric = homiletics. Dealing as preaching does with a sacred Book exposited in a sacred event to sacred people, the tributaries are *sacred* hermeneutics (all the dealings with the text of Scripture) and *sacred* rhetoric (the invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery of the sermon).

But in the next three and a half decades, it is with hermeneutics that I'd like the future to look different. Because hermeneutics is where it all starts. Way before we launch into the pyrotechnics of our pulpiteering, there is that critical task we have to engage in, asking: *What does the text say?*

Actually, may I suggest an alteration to that question? We should, instead, be asking: *What does the text* do *with what it says?* I would affirm that the future of preaching in 2048 (and beyond) lies in that question.

Only in the last couple of decades has language philosophy borne fruit with a better understanding of how language and communication work. Authors (and speakers) *do* things with what they say.

If we are seated at dinner and I tell you, "Can you pass the salt?" it is not a query about the capacity of your neuro-musculo-skeletal apparatus to pick up and a deliver the shaker of NaCl to me. If you thought it was, you

might answer, "Yes, I can, for my brain and nerves and bones and ligaments and muscles are working well, thank you," and not pass the condiment. So unless you catch what I'm *doing*—and I'm actually asking you to pass me the container of the good stuff—you can never apply my utterance as I, the author, intended you to.

That, unfortunately, has not been how Bible scholars have examined the text of Scripture for most of the past two millennia. Rather what is done in the name of hermeneutics is a random excavation of the text: "[P]reachers have the nagging suspicion that there is a good deal of wasted energy in the traditional model of exegesis or, worse, that the real business of exegesis is excavation and earth-moving and that any homiletical gold stumbled over along the way is largely coincidental."[1] I call this the hermeneutic of excavation—the exegetical turning over (and unloading onto the desk of the hapless preacher) every conceivable bit of data: tons of wood, stone, potsherds, arrowhead, nails, dirt, …. Reams of pages and petabytes of information—most of it unfortunately not of any particular use for one seeking to preach a relevant sermon from a specific text to changes lives for the glory of God.

In other words, there is a marked tendency to look *through* the text as if it were a *plain-glass window.* What seems to be important to "see-through-ers" is something behind the text, whether it be historical event, systematic theology dogma, biblical theology tidbit, christocentric assertion, any random connection to the audience, or some such.

I don't want this excavating hermeneutic any more. I want a future (I'll take a good commentary or two in lieu of a whole future!) where I am taught to look *at* the text as if it were a *stained-glass window,* because the text/author is *doing* something with what is said. And unless we catch the author's *doings* there can be no valid application. And it's all right there in the text itself!

So I say: "Enough of the old ways!"

What do we do to go about creating for the church a rosier future of preaching for the next thirty-four years?

I issue a challenge to all of us seated at the homiletics roundtable—veterans, novices, and everyone in between: *Privilege the text!* No more lip-service to the Bible while we privilege something behind it—I don't know what, but it's certainly not the inspired text! Preachers, pay more attention to the text to catch what the author is *doing*: preach the author's agenda. Students, consider engaging in a deeper study of hermeneutics, or—even better—in an intense study of a biblical book or two, seeking to discern what their authors are *doing*: enlighten the people of God. Teachers of preaching, encourage students along those lines, and take the lead yourselves: model it for the rest of us us.

Do we want a better future? Let's make it. 2048, here we come!

NOTES

1. Thomas G. Long, "The Use of Scripture in Contemporary Preaching," *Interpretation* 44 (1990): 343–44.

THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS IN A STORIED CULTURE

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The words on the front page of a recent edition of the *Chicago Tribune* gripped me: "Above all, she was a storyteller." The journalist penned these words in memory and in description of the late Maya Angelou, former Poet Laureate of United States, and leading lady of American culture. Maya Angelou was a masterful storyteller. In her most famous memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, she demonstrated powerful, memorable, and eloquent storytelling. She also understood story's power to shape, sustain, and inspire people to action.

Story is driving and shaping the world in an unprecedented manner. Since the dawn of human history, story was the primary means of internalizing principles and values, distinguishing heroes and heroines from villains and culprits, and bequeathing theological and cultural legacies to emerging generations. But the twenty-first century was born in the throes of an information technology explosion, 24 hour news cycles, and social media, receiving stories from every corner of the globe and with a click sending stories to the remotest parts of the earth, shaping opinions, making some people glad and others mad, fueling revolutions and toppling governments! Story's unprecedented explosion is here.

We live in a time where "story is the dominant cultural force in the world, and the art of film is the dominant medium of this grand enterprise."[1]

In the midst of the seismic global impact of story, one notes that the evangelical pulpit still continues to be to some extent in many circles the medium of an exclusively Aristotelian approach to preaching—abstract, cognitive, emotionless, detached, devoid of tension and resolution, and often dull. The situation is ironic in light of the reality that story/historical narrative is the normative genre and dominant theological force of Scripture.

Some evangelical homiletics professors attempted to address the problem. Many evangelical seminaries and Bible colleges today have course offerings in preaching the Old Testament Narratives, the narrative sections of the Gospel accounts, and the Book of Acts, etc. More attention is given to preaching the Bible's various genres, and the presentation dynamics those genres demand. (It is an issue of faithfulness to the text's content and rhetorical strategy in the sermon and not simply technique.) More millennials are emerging from the halls of evangelical training institutions

equipped with the hermeneutical and homiletical skills necessary to do justice to Scriptures' stories in pulpit discourse.

By the way, I am not implying in the least that our resurgence of interest in story is a capitulation to culture. Instead, I maintain that God has providentially prepared the church for such as time as this by giving us some many stories in the Bible.

In Scripture, God himself is the storyteller par excellence.[2] As storyteller, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy employ irony, humor,[3] wordplay, alliteration, assonance, character development, tension and resolution, and the strategic giving and withholding of information. He shapes us and leads us into deeper fellowship with Himself through incredible storytelling.

Therefore, we need to continue to help students learn how to incorporate His approach to storytelling in messages based on these stories. Are there any preaching models betters than God Himself?

The future of evangelical homiletics is bright, but a part of that future must include a deepening and broadening of our pedagogical skills in helping students become better storytellers as an integral part of gospel proclamation. We have made good progress, but more needs to be done. Eternity is at stake! As Haddon Robinson noted many years ago: "The future of our culture may depend on the stories that capture the imagination and mind of this generation and its children."[4]

NOTES

1. Robert McKee, *Story: Substance, Structure, Style and Principles of Screenwriting* (New York: ReganBooks, 1997), 15.
2. The nature of Scripture implies that God is also a singer and poet. The necessity to develop competencies in preaching biblical poetry in a spoken word culture is something else that needs more work and exploration. I have observed that my preaching students who have a spoken word background do very well with handling Scriptures' poems in a poetic way. For a wonderful example of preaching poetry well, see Moody Founder's Week 2014 on Youtube and listen to Emanuel Padilla's message.
3. Some parts of Scripture are downright funny, e.g., 1 Samuel 18:20-29. Of course, the Bible's humor is always instructive humor. It is never humor for its own sake.
4. Haddon Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*, 3rd Edition (Grand Rapids, 2014), 90.

THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS

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The hours I spend in the homiletics classroom with future preachers fuel my optimism about the future of preaching. On a daily basis, I see the passion, faithfulness, and giftedness of those who will fill tomorrow's pulpits. When I envision the future of evangelical homiletics, my mind races with possibilities.

What do I see when I consider this future?

Let me begin with an assumption, then I will share a few predictions.

First, for the sake of this article, I will assume a continued respect for and reliance on Scripture—it's authority, truth, and relevance. This respect and reliance defines the evangelical church, and it defines evangelical preaching. As I consider the future of evangelical homiletics, therefore, I cannot envision that future apart from its biblical foundation. If we cease to build our churches and pulpits on this biblical foundation, we cease to preach, at least in the evangelical sense.

With this assumption firmly embedded in my heart, I then allow my mind to wander and dream. In what ways will evangelical preaching evolve to maintain its influence in the church and its outreach to the world? How will tomorrow's preachers proclaim biblical truth in a manner that will gain a hearing in the culture and, furthermore, shape that culture for Christ?

In response to these questions, I offer eight optimistic predictions.

1. *Preaching will interweave with apologetics.* Congregants and communities will have less confidence in the foundational tenets of the Christian faith, such as the authority of Scripture, the holiness of God, the deity of Christ, the grace of the cross, and our moral obligations before our holy God. Preachers will provide their flocks with a reasoned defense of the faith, simultaneously boosting their listeners' own confidence and equipping them to defend their faith.

2. *Preaching will shape worldviews.* The lenses through which people view the world are blurred by the numerous ideologies that swirl throughout internet connections and coffee house conversations. Tomorrow's preachers will assist listeners by clearing away this blurriness and equipping them with biblical lenses through which they interpret the world, make decisions, and

pursue mission.

3. Preaching will advance global mission. The world has grown small, and will grow even smaller. In the future, church members will move with greater ease across continents and cultures. Preachers, therefore, will challenge and equip their listeners to advance Christ's mission around the globe. Churches in Midwestern cornfields will video conference with their brothers and sisters in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and will pursue outreach projects on those continents as readily as they pursue mission in their hometowns.

4. Preaching will reflect ethnic diversity. The growing ethnic diversity in culture will affect the pulpit in two ways. First, we will discover more diversity in the pulpit—preachers of various backgrounds serving in prominent pulpits. Second, we will discover more diversity in the pews—people of various backgrounds worshipping alongside each other. Preachers will learn to celebrate rather than fear this diversity.

5. Preaching will find ease with technology. Today, questions still fill the air about the relationship between technology and preaching. Some preachers have plunged head-first into the use of video, internet, and other technologies. Others remain standing to the side scratching their heads. These questions will be settled in the future. Tomorrow's preachers (and listeners) will know nothing other than a world that includes technology and its varied uses. Imagine the Apostle Paul rubbing his hands together if he had access to the technology and travel of today—a conference call with the elders of Ephesus, Face-timing with Titus on Crete, posting podcasts for the believers in Rome—and this all before he boards the red-eye to Spain.

6. Preaching will merge word and deed. Preachers in the future will gain a hearing in the culture because they have served, hands-on, in that culture. Their *ethos* will open doors for the *Logos*. In their own lives, preachers will demonstrate the truth that they preach, and they will reproduce such godly lifestyles in their listeners.

7. Preaching will demand courage. As cultural and legal opposition to evangelical preaching grows more heated, preachers willing to proclaim biblical truth will be targeted. The pulpit of the future will be no place for the faint of heart. In this way, the church's future may reflect its past more than it reflects the present—the last half of the twenty-first century may reflect the last half of the first century, and preaching will require the courage we see displayed in those early believers and preachers.

8. Preaching will demonstrate compassion. Lest the previous point turn our minds toward militant opposition of our culture, let us realize that courage and compassion will intertwine in the hearts, words, and hands of future

preachers. Again, first century believers provide our model. In the midst of a brutal Greco-Roman culture, they demonstrated the love and tenderness of Christ. Such love will emanate from future pulpits.

To mix clichéd metaphors, it may seem as though I have looked into my crystal ball with rose-colored glasses. Yet, I stand in my optimism. God's Word, when proclaimed faithfully, did not return void in the first century. Likewise, it will not return void in the twenty-first.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS?

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This is a big picture question! Certain core issues of evangelical homiletics are unchangeable. Commitment to proclaim biblical truth with its good news of salvation through Christ, in the most effective ways possible, is foundational. Exposition when, in the words of Haddon Robinson 'a preacher endeavors to bend thought to the Scriptures rather than use Scriptures to support thought' is the central tool. Of course, these remain essential for the future. Yet each generation of evangelical homileticians has to check the current state of preaching, not only for lazy spirituality, languid theology and rhetorical ruts but also for its relationship to changing culture. Bad habits easily develop which then need unlearning in renewal and reformation.

Recently I was asked to give a series of lectures with the title: *Beyond three points – preaching at the crossroads*. It is an interesting title. I had to make it clear that three-point sermons themselves are part of the stock-in-trade of sermon design with respectable biblical and rhetorical pedigree. I guess they will always be around. (Indeed, I have three points for this brief article!) But the notion of 'three points' could speak of the bigger issue of a preaching process which has become habitual (whether ending in three points or not). If we allow three points to represent a way of sermon-making that is heavy on technique, placing the preacher firmly in control, it can symbolize preparation being reduced to another weekly task of ministry with exegesis and design dutifully completed to create reliable packages by predictable technique for predictable ends. There is something too safe and comfortable about such preaching that can miss out experiencing the extraordinary and uncontrollable dynamics of spirituality, alive in daily worship, with radiant theological conviction living in God's big narrative and engaging courageously with culture.

I see this conversation piece as an opportunity to give an opinion or two! I do see signs of fresh thinking in the evangelical homiletics world. Let me highlight just a couple or so.

Preachers as Worshipers First

Before all else I long to see the renewal of preaching as worship, with

worshipping preachers caught up in the wonder of God's grace, the gift of his word and his call. Undeniably, the fresh emphasis of trinitarian theology on the wonder of participating not only in fellowship with God but also in his mission challenges preachers about dependence when joining in his work and mission. When God encounters us in his word our first response should always be wondering worship that lays us open to the glories and challenges of being with him and hearing him in order to share his will and vision for us as worshippers who gather and then scatter to his glory. Worship gives energy and perspective and nothing is more vital to Christian preaching. Sermon preparation may end up with a three-point sermon but along the way the worshipping preacher is shaken afresh, experiencing God's hand on the process with all the glorious untidiness of grace at work. Having preached for over forty years I know how easy it is to develop coping systems to fit preaching preparation in as one more task in a busy schedule. And I know how tired and overwhelmed we can be. Yet, the opportunity to preach remains the greatest spiritual privilege for Christ's ambassadors who have been in the throne room and now have life-giving words. At a time when prayer is often marginalized in our church business culture, spiritually alive preachers are essential.

Preachers as Missionaries

Preachers have always needed to respond faithfully to changing culture. Culture is an umbrella word describing the complex worlds of thought and behavior that condition the way that human beings live together. Yes, worlds plural because we live with overlapping cultures in workplaces, social media and neighborhoods in which local churches add to the mix. However, western culture in general shares common features such as individualism, consumerism, materialism, pluralism and hedonism. We can easily add to the list. Preachers can respond in a number of ways. Some ignore culture making only passing reference; others fight it by attacking contemporary culture. As preachers listen to missiologists we identify two further ways. One is the subtle and dangerous path of *enculturation* when preachers and churches have (often unwittingly) succumbed to cultural norms by making their witness as attractive and comfortable as possible. Appealing to individual taste they compromise with consumerism, encouraging hearers to make Christianity a personal choice which involves little life change and no community responsibility.

The other option which evangelical homiletics increasingly faces is the missionary alternative of *inculturation,* where preachers identify with the community like Ezekiel—to sit where they sit (Ez. 3:15). Sometimes called incarnational ministry, it requires preachers to be closer not only to their congregations' lives but also (more demanding) to their communities. Missionary preachers cultivate missionary congregations who scatter after gathering

in church, convicted that they are just as much held in the mission and purpose of God; that God's kingdom is bigger than church and they join in with the Spirit's work wherever they live and work. Their consequent missionary stories are the very stuff of sermon illustration and application.

You may recognize that recent missional theology undergirds all this. To develop missional theology further is beyond this brief article, but aspects such as its missionary hermeneutic that treats the biblical story from Genesis through to Revelation as a whole require serious attention.

Preachers as Community Integrators

I know that's a strange way of expressing it, but preachers as worshippers involved deeply in missionary living are inevitably involved in greater collaboration with others. Not only working with others in preparing worship and relating it to every part of church life but ensuring the whole community's discernment and direction is led by God. Building community requires all kinds of preaching.Recently I listed some of them including: evangelistic, doctrinal, celebrative, liturgical, salvation history, pastoral, prophetic and missional. By such preaching our triune God seeks to build a new kind of people who belong together in new creation with the widest implications for ethics and relationships as God works with us in his future for his world.

Every preacher needs reminding that the preaching task lies utterly beyond human ability yet God requires us to respond with the best we can offer. God in his mercy invites us to stay so close to his word that he is able to our open eyes and lives so that we can proclaim the new reality of kingdom living which changes everything. There is nothing packaged and predictable about this. The future demands new kinds of preacher open to his renewal who tell out and live out his good news for the twenty-first century.

THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL PREACHING

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It's hard to answer a question about the future of evangelical homiletics if the current state of the art is any indication. I get a chance to watch television these days and many different preachers purchase time to be heard by the folks who watch TV. Many speakers seem to identify preaching with yelling. Although I give them credit for wanting to be heard, no sermon is good enough to have it all delivered in a high volume by a panting, yelling preacher. Preaching in the days ahead will be like lively conversation or it will not be listened to at all.

Other preachers act like the host of other more secular shows. Again, the sermons are relevant, but not particularly biblical. The preacher takes a current problem faced by people in the congregation, things like drinking, drugs, and sexual abuse, and tells about men and women he knows who are trapped by these afflictions. I give preachers high marks who talk to people about life as it is experienced. The Bible speaks about these topics, but in the sermons I hear the biblical material gets very light treatment. Preaching in the days ahead dare not settle for that. I commend these preachers for preaching sermons that speak to real people with overwhelming problems, but they tend to refer people to a counselor to handle their hang-ups at the point in their sermon when I wonder if God's word has anything to say that can help listeners deal with the sins themselves. Preaching in the future must do better or it will lose the hearers to communicators who say nothing much about how ordinary people can begin to work with the problems that are drowning them

What will preaching in the future sound like? My guess is that it is less likely to sound like sermons of the past and more likely to be weighted toward folks who hurt because of the tragic choices they have made. Strong preaching will depend on different disciplines but at its heart and core it must be biblical. If we surrender that we have nothing worth hearing. If that is all we have to say, however, we will not be speaking in any specific way to people caught on the barbed wire of life.

THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS

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What is the future of evangelical homiletics? I really do not know, but I can tell you what I hope it is. I hope it is short. I hope that the *need* for homiletics—evangelical or otherwise—shrinks to the vanishing point because God so pours out his Spirit on the Bride of Christ that the word is preached and received with power and conviction in whatever shape or form it is delivered. I hope that the word which evangelical preachers preach will be the word of God and be recognized as such, the word which goes to work in believers (1 Thess. 2:13). Homiletical insights and skills can help the messengers get out of the way so that this can happen, but in the final analysis, nothing we homileticians postulate can make the word of God more powerful than it already is. We have neither the ability to improve it nor the need to do so.

If, then, you grant that fundamentally the aim of homiletics is or ought to be to offer wise counsel to those charged with preaching concerning how we let God's voice be heard in the assembly and the wider world, what sorts of things should we do and refrain from doing as good homileticians? Or, to put it otherwise, what, as I see things, are the durable duties of the evangelical homiletician in the days ahead?

First, we must pray. Acts 6:4 reveals the apostolic priority: "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Prayer is faith in its work clothes. When we pray, we are saying in practice that unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain. In prayer, we confess that we cannot open blind eyes or transform listeners' lives. In prayer, we ask God to do what we cannot do and to do it through the means he has established, namely his preached word.

Second, we must listen to God. It is no good encouraging others to hear God's voice if we demonstrate that we are unwilling to do so. Isaiah 50:4-5 portrays the Lord Jesus in the picture it paints of God's servant. The way we and our students get a tongue that can speak for God is by getting ears that listen to God. "The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught." In Scripture listening to God and obeying him are often more or less synonymous. When we obey the truth we know, we put ourselves in a position to learn more (Col. 1:9-10); when we do not listen to God, he does not hear our cry to him for a word for his people (Micah 3:4-7).

Third, we must let the Bible set the agenda. It is right and indeed necessary to understand our listeners, but it is also potentially distracting. We must study them, not to know what to say to them—the Scriptures tell us that—but to know where to start, what language to use, and how to clarify and make vivid the God-given message. The besetting sin of preachers is to preach themselves (2 Cor. 4:5); the temptation of homileticians is to aid and abet preachers in falling into this sin. Instead, our responsibility is to help preachers preach the gospel and all its entailments and to do so in reliance on the Holy Spirit. Our aim is that both they and we will be found faithful because we have not in any respect gone beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:1-6). When the gospel is truly preached, the herald is not lauded for his cleverness, skill, knowledge, or spiritual insight. Faithfulness is the sole criterion by which he will be judged on the last day. Then the praise that comes from God that will eclipse all human affirmation.

Fourth, we must model a sound hermeneutic. There is often a wide gap between what we profess about rightly handling the word of God and what happens when we and our students preach. Most of us learn by imitation and the sound methodology and theology we display when we preach speaks more convincingly than our lectures. If the homiletical tide is to turn toward faithful preaching, it will happen when we and our students model faithful handling of the Scriptures week in and week out in the pulpits entrusted to us. Those models will generate aspirations in our hearers to be imitators of those preachers as they are of Christ who offered his own homiletical manifesto in John 12:49-50, "For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me."

Fifth, we must reach the homiletically unreached. The Majority World teems with preachers who have little or no training in how to faithfully steward God's word so as to proclaim it faithfully and relevantly. Those of us who are richly blessed with training must humble ourselves to share what we have in ways that equip many who may not be aware of their need. They have so few models, they often do not realize what they could be doing to open God's word and feed their flocks. We must be less concerned about the names we make for ourselves by parsing technical homiletical niceties and more concerned about the quality of spiritual meals needed to nourish our brothers and sisters worldwide. This is not to say that we abandon rigor, precision, or quality research, but only that we harness these in the service of the global church; transposing our findings and insights into genuinely helpful and truly accessible wisdom.

The best future for evangelical homiletics from my vantage point would be a speedy answer to the heart cry, "Come Lord Jesus!" In the meantime, we can and must pray, submit to God's word, proclaiming it faithfully, showing others how to do the same, not for the benefit of the few, but the many. How long we are free to do this is in God's gracious hands.

THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL HOMILETICS

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I believe in homiletics. But not much.
A thousand sorrows teaches a man to preach.[1]
John Piper

In a *very* real way I agree with John Piper. There is no pedagogical homiletic experience that can create a man so long on the anvil of God that his life bleeds the truth he is teaching. I really do believe that. While I agree in spirit, I fear that some today understand these two as exclusive of one another, i.e.: "Go to God's school and don't worry about training in preaching." Yet, this assumes so much.

This way of thinking assumes the preacher understands the nature of Scripture, the ecclesiastical mandate for the preacher to explain it, and has some sense of the power of the Word of God; that the Word should not be tampered with by adding the alloy of our own opinion. This also assumes the preacher has some sort of natural giftedness, that the preacher is interesting. However, if the preacher *does not* understand a theology of preaching, the nature of the function of the Word in the life of a believer within the local church, the subsequent mandate to explain the Scripture to people, or natural giftedness, then that preacher benefits greatly from formal instruction. And what a thrill to experience the quality of students that God stewards to our care!

This is why I am absolutely sort of optimistic about the future of evangelical homiletics.

The optimism for the future of preaching does not breech the soil of the evangelical landscape, but the classroom. More than ever, I experience students who deeply want to know God through His Word. And this, of course, is the end game. Preaching trends with their respective emphases will come and go. However, if we have students who fall in love with the words of the Word, I have confidence they will spend the rest of their lives trying to work out of them what God works in them. And we do. Students increasingly are disengaged with preaching cloaked in the pretense of formality, or a crass overreach for presumed authenticity that is itself pretentious. No, this group simply wants to be faithful to explain Scripture and let God take care of the rest. This is a very encouraging trend. Sort of.

The governor of my optimism is the reality that we have fewer students to influence. The reason these students have this desire to preach well is because they blocked a few years off to think about theology, to wrestle with biblical studies, and grapple with the nuances of biblical interpretation. This process of mental gestation took place in a campus laboratory where so many other students were trying to do the same thing. This is theological incubation: an intentional desire to colonize around the life of the mind, so that that the life of ministry would be deeper, richer, and in the end more impactful.

Yet those who choose to be intellectual colonialist before they are ministerial pioneers are fewer and fewer between. All leading indicators show that online courses will be growing and residency programs decreasing. There are some positive things about this, after all, the distance format reaches those who did not have access to theological education before this time. For this reason, I'm pro-distance education and, prayerfully, not an academic elitist curmudgeon. Yet, what I want to do with the person cannot ultimately be done by distance. There is too much to be caught that is nuanced by incarnational pedagogy.

The other reality is that there seem to be fewer preachers who will simply explain the text. There are several reasons. The first reason is timeless: while attempting to place the text of Scripture in local context, there has always been deference for practical application. This is the necessary mandate of all preaching. However, preaching that is application-driven alone can descend unchecked into purely the pragmatic, and exposition of culture and not the text. Proverbial opinion rolled into arm chair psychology. This is true now, and has always been so. Yet, there is a more time specific trend we are seeing.

For want of a robust theology of preaching, the methodology of expository preaching is often conflated with a *style* of preaching. Be it the three point preacher all suited up, or the slick seeker-seeking, PowerPointing alliterator, too some it's just all so 2005. Preachers under 35 generally understand exposition as a style; one that is unattractive and dated. Sadly, they jettison style, and then the method with it. Perhaps the most important homiletics class, or part of a class, is a theology of preaching. Our theology of preaching transcends style. If we do not understand the way in which God communicates, we will never know how to communicate ourselves. Which is another point altogether.

Finally, the nature of Scripture will always be under fire. While some might disagree with this prediction, and I pray I am wrong, I'm convinced that future generations will redefine an evangelical understanding of the nature of Scripture. Some might see this as a positive sign. However, I'm convinced, since this is an opinion piece, that when Scripture is perceived as something less than the very Word of God, representing the perfect nature of God, the impetus to do the difficult work of understanding and explaining it will be lost.

So this is my optimism: very bright students desiring to be faithful and effective. This is my pessimism: a world where Scripture is devalued, exposition is seen merely as a stylistic relic, while distance education rubs out the need for residential theological training.

However, it is exactly in these moments when we need fewer prophets and more historians. Historically, God rights His people; our propensity to err is not greater than His providence. So we wait in His care while we fight for the authority of Scripture and necessary clarity in its proclamation. May He give us grace.

NOTES

1. via @JohnPiper 19 June 2014, 7:01 a.m. Tweet.

THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL PREACHING

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In preparation for the 2003 invasion of Iraq the United States military conducted the most massive and expensive war simulation in history. Needing to put to the test its technological innovations and data links between its various branches, the Pentagon asked Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper, former president of the Marine Corps University, to come out of retirement and command the "enemy" forces. The results were historic and catastrophic. The subsequent virtual defeat that the American forces suffered at his hands was the equivalent of losing 20,000 service personnel in a single day and became the subject of many articles, books, and documentaries.[1]

While the Pentagon relied on advanced technologies, Van Riper actually employed World War I era off-the-grid communications to escape detection and unconventional methods that were unanticipated—and won. In an interview with the PBS series *Nova*, Van Riper argued that the nature of war is immutable. The technology may change the way war is carried out, he argued, but "in reality, the fundamental nature of war hasn't changed, won't change, and, in fact, can't change. . . . What is changing—in fact, is always changing—is the character and form of war, and the technology is what influences that character and form. We need to understand that and be careful of it, but it's not what should drive us."[2]

Evangelical preachers can learn much about preaching from Van Riper's analysis of war. Technologies and innovations have certainly changed some aspects of preaching, mostly for the better. We preach from a bound Bible, not a cumbersome scroll. We can amplify our voices, control the temperature in the room, enhance the mood with lighting, show video illustrations, and concurrently post points of the sermon on social media. We can preach to multiple sites simultaneously via video feed or we can stream it live on the internet to a virtually limitless though unseen audience. We can craft the sermon and the environment to feel like a classroom lecture or we can give it the atmosphere of a TED talk. Who knows what other changes a generation will bring?

One would be foolish and faddish, however, to be so enamored with available technologies that one would abandon the simplicity of the biblical mandate to preach the Word. The fundamental nature of preaching hasn't changed, won't change, and in fact, cannot change. The essential elements of preaching are a preacher, a Bible, and an audience. Whatever else may

change, those three things cannot and will not.

Evangelical preaching is distinct precisely because of our history. Not only is our belief rooted in history through a faith that has been once for all delivered to the saints, but our preaching itself stands in a stream of faithful proclamation through centuries of that faith that has preceded us. The preaching of a faithful evangelical pastor in the United States is, at its core, not unlike that of a faithful and biblical pastor centuries ago or continents away or, I am confident, that which faithful preachers will herald until Christ comes.

When young evangelical preachers today watch a video of Billy Sunday or R. G. Lee or some great pulpiteer from the past century, they are amused at the style and the rhetorical flourishes. They don't find the alliteration and assonance clever or even helpful. But they still recognize and resonate with *the gospel that they preached*. That connection to our past will be the same connection to our future.

Whatever trends we may reflect and whatever innovations we may utilize, the similarity will always be greater than the difference because the text of Scripture is the foundation of evangelical preaching. Evangelical homiletics will always reflect the rhetorical and communicational preferences of the culture and that will undoubtedly shift with every generation, but it will be rooted in the truth of the text, because that—and only that—is what is permanent and transcendent in our preaching.

NOTES

1. The best known of these assessments is in Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2005), pp. 99-146.
2. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/military/immutable-nature-war.html. Accessed August 26, 2014.

PREACHING AND PERSONALITY

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ABSTRACT: The topic of preaching and personality was addressed by Phillips Brooks in his Yale Lectures on Preaching in 1877. This article serves as an introduction to the area of preaching and personality and intends to raise the working preachers' awareness of the impact their personalities have on their preaching.

INTRODUCTION

In his Yale Lectures, Phillips Brooks famously stated that, "preaching is the bringing of truth through personality."[1] Preachers have often used this statement in a somewhat distorted way by neglecting his emphasis on truth and by making it serve as justification for God's use of their unrefined personalities, without any further transforming work of the Holy Spirit being needed in them. Before examining the role of personality in more detail it is worth quoting Brooks more fully for reasons of balance and integrity. He is as much concerned about 'truth' as he is "personality." More fully, he writes:

> Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of these can it spare and still be preaching. The truest truth, the most authoritative statement of God's will communicated in any other way than through the personality of brother man to men is not preached truth. ...On the other hand, if men speak to other men that which they do not claim for truth, if they use their powers of persuasion or of entertainment to make other men listen to their speculations, or do their will, or applaud their cleverness, that is not preaching either. The first lacks personality. The second lacks truth. And preaching is the bringing of truth through personality. It must have both elements.[2]

Recognizing Brooks' twin emphases, this paper nevertheless sets out to make some elementary observations about the role of personality in preaching.

WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

Personality refers to the characteristics of individuals which go to make up a regular pattern of responses to their external worlds. It is about the way a person is wired up, which shows itself in their default reactions in several different aspects of their being, namely of their thinking (the cognitive element), feelings (the emotional element) and behaving (the active and volitional aspects). These elements combine in a unique way to enable us to distinguish one individual from another in personality terms as well as in physical terms.

Personality differs from character and is often considered a modern invention, as David Wells has explained.[3] Character relates to the moral realm and concerns virtues, right and wrong, the disciplining of desires, self-sacrifice, perseverance and integrity. Personality, on the other hand, relates to the psychological realm and is generally considered morally neutral.[4] It has to do with more superficial qualities about whether one is attractive, effervescent, forceful, humorous, quiet, confident, diffident, brash, and so on.

While it is true that the fascination with personality as opposed to character is a recent one, aided and abetted by the development of the discipline of psychology, it is also true that human beings have always sought to distinguish one personality type from another.

In the classical world, Hippocrates (c 460-370 BC) posited four types of personality. Put simply; the *sanguine* were playful and extrovert; the *choleric* were self-confident and leaders; the *melancholic* were sensitive and introvert; and, the *phlegmatic* were peace-loving and private. So, different personality types have always been acknowledged even if in an embryonic form.

In the mid-twentieth century Hans Eysenck built on the classic model and produced a popular approach that placed people on a three-dimensional continuum: that of (i) introversion-extraversion, (ii) stability-neuroticism and (iii) tendermindedness-toughmindedness.[5] Subsequently mainline psychologists have distinguished people according to the big five dimensions of (i) extraversion-introversion; (ii) openness-closedness; (iii) neuoriticism-stability; (iv) hostility-agreeableness and, (v) conscientiousness-creativity.[6]

Most popular of all in recent days (and controversially so in some circles because of its Jungian foundation) has been the Myers-Briggs Inventory that is more complex than the big five dimensions and which produces sixteen different personality profiles. In the only recent academic study of the relationship between personality and preaching of which I am aware, Leslie Francis and Andrew Village have made use of this model to demonstrate the effect our personality has on our preaching and reflect on it theologically. Wisely they start not with the impact of personality on the sermon we preach but, prior to that, its impact on the way we read and exegete scripture, for that has massive implications for the style, form and content of our sermons.[7] Their objective is to bring the often unspoken effect

of our personalities into the open and to suggest we acknowledge them by using a four-step method of biblical hermeneutics and sermon preparation framed around the acronym SIFT (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling and Thinking).[8]

My purpose in this paper is not to enter into an academic debate but to provide a more popular introduction to the area and to raise the working preachers' awareness of the impact their personalities have on their preaching. Before exploring that impact further, we should ask a prior question.

DOES GOD USE OUR PERSONALITIES?

The answer must be a resounding yes. Although scripture gives little attention to the question of personality—at least not as it is sharply defined in modern psychological terms—it provides a multitude of hints about the personalities of its writers and participants. Not only does it seem incapable of suppressing such hints but rather, it uses them to enrich our understanding of its message.

Take the Old Testament prophets by way of illustration. Isaiah was a sensitive, visionary poet. Jeremiah was a depressive, as God knew well before he was ever born but went ahead nonetheless to appoint him to a prophet to the nations (Jer. 1:5). Ezekiel was evidently a well-ordered priest who could set out his vision of the future in an architectural plan of the new temple. Amos roared and thundered like one of the wild animals he encountered while tending his sheep. Hosea, deeply wounded by his own experience, wooed the people he addressed with passionate tenderness. Haggai quietly did his sums, as if he were a maths teacher. And Malachi poured out question after question like a modern-day lawyer interrogating a witness in a courtroom. Does God use our personalities? He certainly used theirs in the communication of his message.

Or, take the New Testament by way of illustration. Matthew was self-evidently an organized scribe whose gospel is a masterpiece of well-structured textbook style teaching. Peter was an "unschooled ordinary" man (Acts 4:13) but full of courage, as shines through in the gospel of Mark, assuming he was behind the gospel as Eusebius suggests, as well as through the letters that bear his name. Paul was a multi-talented, passionate achievement-oriented person who could serve as pioneering missionary and theological teacher at one and the same time. In writing to Timothy, he described himself insightfully as "a herald, apostle and a teacher" (2 Tim. 1:11). John, on the other hand was much more reflective and inward in his orientation, as befits "the disciple who Jesus loved" (Jn. 21:20). Apollos demonstrated yet another personality profile since he was a learned man 'with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures' (Acts 18:24). One can picture him taking delight in pouring over the scrolls and engaging wherever he could in erudite discussion. Yet like all wise academic-types, he did not have a closed mind and was open to further instruction, even from people

like Priscilla and Aquila who, while probably not his academic equal, could still teach him "the way of God more adequately" (Acts 18:26). And what of diffident, Timothy? Well, more of him later.

So, God does use a multitude of different personalities as his messengers and in doing so we see the mosaic of the gospel more wonderfully and completely displayed.

Are there any personalities God does not, or cannot, use? The answer at one level must be that the sovereign and creator Lord is not limited by his human creation and he is able to speak or act through anyone, as Moses was made to realise (Exod. 4:10-12). If he can use Samson, whom Max Weber effectively described as a charismatic berserk, he can use all sorts. Although, it must be stressed, this does not excuse us from addressing issues of sanctification and maturity that relate to our ministries.

Having said God uses anyone, there are some who are less naturally suited to be his messengers than others, especially if we have a regular pulpit ministry in mind.[9] In spite of glorious historical exceptions, the extreme introvert, the unstable neurotic or the extremely tough-minded or extremely tenderhearted (to use Eysenck's classification) is less likely to be a suitable for regular preaching to a congregation. The first is unlikely to engage people, the second will wear a congregation out emotionally, the third will abuse them and only the spiritually masochistic will survive, while the latter is likely to be over-indulgent towards human frailty, lack any bite in their preaching or be over-sentimental in their delivery.

PREACHING AND PERSONALITY TYPES

Having essentially agreed that God uses all types of personality, with some minor qualification, we may now return to look at the relationship between personalities and preaching more closely.

At a popular level I have found the approach that analyses social styles into four broad categories of personality the most immediately helpful in practice. They are those of the driver, analytic, amiable and expressive.[10] What differentiates them is their position on two axes. The vertical axis shows their orientation is ether towards the task, or towards people, showing what people respond to most easily. The horizontal axis places them according to whether their normal disposition is to ask or to tell. It relates to the degree of assertiveness or responsiveness a person demonstrates. The analysis gives rise to the fourfold catagorization. *Drivers* are concerned about the task and usually tell people in a more or less assertive manner. *Analytics* are equally focused on the task but ask lots of questions about it and therefore are considered less assertive. *Amiables* and *expressives* both prioritize people over the task, but whereas amiables ask people about themselves, their feelings and so on, expressives creatively communicate with people exhibiting confidence (or assertiveness), and gaining their allegiance often through excitement. This may be illustrated as follows:

TASK ORIENTED

ASK	Analytic	Driver	TELL
	Amiable	Expressive	

RELATIONALLY ORIENTED

Each of these styles has their strengths and weaknesses:

• *Drivers* want to accomplish the vision, goals or tasks and so positively, will be determined, decisive, energetic and ambitious. Negatively, drivers can be insensitive, inconsiderate and domineering.

• *Analytics* will be as committed to the vision, goals or task but in a totally different way. They will often pour over details and, positively, demonstrate that they are conscientious, serious and persistent. Negatively, analytics can be negative, pedantic, and unmoveable.

• *Amiables* will be much more concerned about people's feeling and views than drivers or analytics. Positively they can prove dependable, supportive and diplomatic and will probably be much-loved. Negatively, they can be indecisive, conformist and fearful.

• *Expressives* are also concerned about people but are not held back by them in the way amiables might be. They are extrovert, charismatic, talkative and generous, but negatively they can prove restless, loud and undisciplined.

A SHORT EXCURSUS ON LEADERSHIP

This analysis may be put to all sorts of uses, in addition to any insight it might offer into preaching. It proves, for example, an excellent tool in relation to leadership teams. No single person is an omnicompetent leader and ideally leadership teams need a combination of all these personality types to function effectively. But the styles are so different that it can easily lead people to conflict, with team members irritating each other rather than productively working together. It is vital to discover how each other ticks and why one member of the team approaches things in one way, and another in another way. Once that is understood, teams can play to each other's strengths, appreciate the particular contribution a team member can make and develop a much more wholistic, as well as harmonious, style of leadership.

Drivers make the best leaders but they need the analytics to manage the details, amiables to smooth ruffled feathers and expressives to see their

visions effectively communicated to others. Analytics are the best managers. They are often the back-room administrators who shun the limelight, but whose contribution is indispensible to the success of any task or project. Amiables usually have the ear of people in a church or organisation and can pick up disquiet or read moods. They often do not make the best leaders because they want to keep people happy too much. But without them, drivers are likely to be involved in a number of car crashes. Expressives are wonderful at motivating and inspiring people. But if they are not careful their style can verge on the manipulative. They do not make the best leaders since they are often restless for the next goal or attracted by a new ambition, rather than having the stability to work something through. Even so, they make wonderful allies for drivers in winning people's support for change.

APPLYING PERSONALITY STYLES TO PREACHING

Years ago, Sidney Greidanus reminded us that "The New Testament uses as many as thirty-three different verbs to describe what we usually cover with the single word *preaching*."[11] Because it is grounded in a conviction of the Bible as the word of God, I am committed to expository preaching as the method which preachers should primarily employ.[12] Yet, the rich and varied New Testament vocabulary about preaching challenges me to realise that not all sermons will be products of the same method or partake of the same style and ethos. Factors such as the genre of scripture, the level of spiritual maturity of the audience, the cultural, even denominational, expectation of the audience, the circumstances in the which the sermon is delivered will all have a shaping impact on the sermon. So, too, will the personality of the preacher.

Using the analysis of social styles outlined above, we might say that four different styles of preaching, might be expected in our pulpits. This will often lead to very different forms of sermon but the analysis remains relevant even within the one form of an expository sermon, at least if we use a broad definition of expository. Each style will benefit from the strengths of the preacher's personality, and each may at the same time be limited by that style.

The Driver

The driver is likely to preach authoritatively, announcing a word from the Lord with clarity and conviction. Their preaching is not only likely to be declaratory in style, free from "ifs" and "buts," but aimed at producing an active response and transformational change in the listeners. The preacher who is a driver will have looked carefully at the text and discerned its main thrust but not stopped to dig deeply into its finer points or exegetical conundrums. In biblical terms, this style fits perhaps most with that of the *kērux*, the herald. Such preaching has the advantage of being transparent and

aiming for a response, which may often prove practical. The chief response the driver will seek is that of commitment. Such preaching may, however, sometimes produce uncertainty in the lives of the hearers when they seek to translate the deductive clarity and simplicity of the pulpit into the more complex realities of their everyday lives, because it may lack nuance. The pulpit proclamation may well need to be accompanied by more sensitive pastoral application.

The Analytic

The analytic will probably have delighted him or herself in the text all week by way of preparation. Such people surround themselves with commentaries, delve into the text's complexities and ambiguities, set it in its historical context, and be conversant with the recent debates about its meaning and application. The analytics, providing they can emerge from suffocating detail, may prove a very fine teacher, opening up the text and sympathetically setting before the congregation its varied meaning. Such a preacher may well produce outline notes for the congregation to follow. Perhaps the nearest biblical word for this style of preaching is that of *didaskalos,* the teacher. The authority of the analytic may be found in the honesty with which they have confronted the exegetical or expository options and then drawn their own conclusions from them. Yet, the analytic may suffer from a surfeit of detail, be that historical, linguistic, exegetical or theological. The potential weakness is that of producing 'an uncertain sound' and a failure, as Paul warns, to clearly call people to battle (1 Cor. 14:8). People may be fed in the mind but not moved in their lives. Or, if the analytic is not a skilled teacher, they may simply be left confused. Analytics need to cook their sermons well if they are to set a nutritious meal before the congregation rather than undigestible ingredients. If the purpose of feeding people is to give them energy to serve, setting ten different interpretations of a passage, with their strengths and weaknesses, or profoundly agonizing over the application of a text may not achieve that aim.

The Amiable

Amiables are likely to prove reflective, pastoral teachers. They will read the scripture to receive a word from God (often a comforting one). They may find the "facts" of the text or any exegetical or commentary work largely irrelevant. They will cross over from one cultural era to another as if they were the spiritual counterparts of Dr. Who. Some amiables make great devotional preachers who, by their identity with the hearers, warm their hearts. They will relate to people's spiritual experiences, as well as their ordinary experiences, and prove experts in spirituality. Other amiable preachers may ooze empathy form the pulpit, sucking the text dry for all its worth in terms of the persons who inhabit it and their dilemmas, ambiguities, challenges

and victories. Such a preacher is probably going to be much loved for their personal qualities and approachability. They will want the congregation to hear the drift of the music rather than be concerned about the individual notes. The danger, of course, is that they will never be tempted to preach on the harder texts, or challenge their congregations, in case they frighten them. They may create congregations of believers who feel very affirmed in Christ but who are never given an incentive to grow to maturity. The most fundamental temptation confronted by amiables as they approach the pulpit is to make people, rather than God the subject of their sermon. They may stray more into anthropology and less into theology. No biblical noun serves as a title for the preacher whose personality fits within the category of amiable, which is an interesting observation, though of debateable significance. Be that as it may, it does relate to the verb *therapeuō* and the idea of *pathos,* both of which are positive words in scripture.

The Expressive

The expressive is likely to be a popular communicator whose stories, jokes, expressions, metaphors and word pictures will move congregations and often evoke an immediate emotional or heart-felt response. The balance of emphasis in the preparation of the sermon will be on how the concepts gleaned from the text are to be conveyed to a twenty-first century audience who are not used to listening to historical, textual or philosophical monologues. The text will not be neglected but when it comes to choosing "something old and something new" (Matt. 13:52), the default preference will be for the new. Modern visual techniques, including image, film clips and music, may well accompany this sort of preaching. Such preachers often make great exhorters and the biblical authority for such preaching is found in the concept of *paraklētos*. Perhaps a common weakness of the expressive is the failure to realise that the exhortations of scripture are not issued in a vacuum but arise after solid teaching has been given. Furthermore, the temptation is to allow style to triumph over substance.

It is worth pausing at this point and ask yourself to which of these personality styles you lean and to ask what implication that has for your preaching. Few will fit exactly into one of the above styles or another, but most with tend towards one style or another.

If the above analysis is not helpful, start with a blank sheet of paper, as it were, and ask yourself what impact your personality has on your preaching. What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? List your own personality characteristics which you consider important, such as, whether you are authoritarian or diffident; humorous or dry; studious or living for the moment, organised or muddled, hard-nosed or sensitive? You might also ask what impact your gender has on your preaching? Such a question may be difficult to answer, since for most, their gender is a bit like wearing spectacles—those who do so are not always conscious they are wearing

them! So we may need others, perhaps those of the other gender, to help in that. Genders, unlike personalities, are a given, but even so may predispose us in a general sense to certain personality traits rather than others.

PERSONALITY: IS THAT IT?

Brooks' assertion that preaching is "the communication of truth through personality" is often taken to mean that we should take our personalities for granted and just go with them. But that was not Brooks' intention. Later in his lectures he returns to the question of personality and shows that he is well aware of the complexity of the relationship between it and preaching. Sometimes the preacher does not use his personality at all in preaching but seeks to deny it. For others, the personality may "be offensively and crudely prominent." Still others do not bring it to the fore and yet it is felt as the preacher uses it to preach with persuasive and winsome power.[13]

There are at least three stances we can take in handling our own personalities in relation to your preaching. First we may be in denial, refusing to admit any connection between the two and arguing that we just preach the word of the Lord as it is untouched, as it were by any human hands! What we deny is probably all too evident to our listeners. It is much better to own our personalities, playing to their strengths and restraining their weaknesses than to deny them, so that they can be surrendered for the Master's use.

The most extreme form of this I have encountered was when a small coterie of students thought it right not to put any expression into the reading of the Bible in public worship. Instead, they read it in a flat monotone, at a steady pace, without acknowledging its paragraphs, phasing or mood, lest they interposed themselves between the text and the Spirit of God who alone, they argued, had the right to bring the emphasis or meaning to it he desired to the listeners. This is, of course, nonsense. By denying any expression in the reading they were drawing attention to their (dull) personalities, rather than helpfully hiding them. Why would the God who inspired such poetry, such narratives, such rhetoric, such passionate argument, and such visionary images as we find in scripture want to stifle the expression of the very forms he has inspired? True, we may interpose ourselves too much, as Brooks acknowledged in reference to the sermon, but to deny our God-given individual personalities in the communication of the gospel is to rebuff the God who is vibrant and an infinitely varied creator. To deny our personalities have any impact is to live a fiction.

Secondly, we may embrace our personalities and exploit them for all they are worth. But this is equally unsatisfactory. People often excuse their ungodly behaviour by saying, "That's the way God made me, that's the way I am." But Christians are not fatalists and we come to Christ, conscious of our fallen natures, as trusting, needy sinners, precisely so that his Spirit can change us. So it should be with our preaching. God has made us individually unique in such a way as to result in our lives having wonderful strengths.

Those strengths are at the same time are tarnished by the fall. Strengths and weaknesses are usually not two different registers in our lives but most often two sides of the same coin. Weaknesses are often distorted or undisciplined strengths. So we should never be complacent about our strengths, but rather exercise great discernment in evaluating them.[14]

As preachers, then, we must be thankful to God for those elements of our personality, which he can use to his glory, but equally alert to the potential for them to be misused, perhaps for our own glory. Take the example of preachers (expressives) who are a great story-tellers and comedians. Such preachers can often, as we say, have congregations eating out of their hand. They can disarm a person's defences and bring them face to face with God. But such preachers often need to know when to stop the stories and silence the jokes. I have seen several gifted evangelists miss the *kairos* moment of their preaching, when people were itching to respond to Christ, by telling one too many stories, one too many jokes.

Equally, analytical preachers who pour over the text and plumb its depths and riches, fail in their duty as preachers if they shelter behind their introverted, book-shaped personalities and do not work at engaging the living, breathing congregation in front of them. They are not preaching to other people's footnotes but to Bill and Mary who are run ragged by their kids, are just keeping up with their bills, are worried about their aged parents, are suffering from illness, abuse or war and so on.

That brings us, thirdly, to the ideal position, which is that of acknowledging our personalities, and dedicating them to God so that he might use their strengths, but equally acknowledging those aspects of our personalities that need refinement. So we do not accept that "that's just the way we are," but commit ourselves to grow and be transformed by the Spirit so that we are constantly becoming a fitter instrument in the Lord's hand.

In terms of the personality profiles we have been using this is likely to mean that:

• drivers will need to learn more pastoral sensitivity and work honestly at bringing some light and shade to their sermons, recognising that too much action without enough nutrition may leave a congregation flagging;

• analytics will need to work at communication skills, moving more consciously from text to audience, from the theoretical to the experiential, realising that congregations composed of Oxbridge or Harvard theological students are very few and far between;

• amiables will need to become more robust, handling some of the harsher passages of scripture, not just, as the old cliché has it, 'comforting the disturbed but also disturbing the comfortable', keeping God always at the center;

• expressives will need to learn to discipline their brilliant communication techniques so that people truly hear what is said and not just the way it is said. They will also need to ensure they have done their research on the text and have something worthwhile to say. Substance must never be obliterated by style.

TIMOTHY: A CASE STUDY IN THE REFINEMENT OF PERSONALITY AND PREACHING

The apostle Paul trusted Timothy with great responsibilities, knowing that he was suited to the task of being a second-generation leader as the church underwent some challenging transitions due to the passing of the original apostles. Some of the strengths of his personality peep through Paul's second letter to him. He has "a sincere faith" and does not treat it lightly (1:5). From what we can piece together from elsewhere in the letter, Paul is probably reinforcing some of Timothy's positive traits in saying that "the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind" and that "opponents must be gently instructed" (2:24-5). He is presented as teachable but, once wisely taught, as a person with convictions. Consequently, he is to "continue in what you have learned and become convinced of" (3:14). He is to lead the church, as he is capable of doing, correcting its errors and deficiencies "with great patience" (4:2).

Yet the obverse side of gentleness, kindness and patience is that it can breed timidity, indolence and passivity. Timothy needed to cultivate a more robust style of leadership. So he is reminded that "the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid" (1:7), that he must not shrink in embarrassment (or, more strongly "shame") at Paul's imprisonment (1:8), but rather "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1). He is to conduct his duties, presenting himself as a workman who has no need for shame (2:15), having confidence to "correct" and "rebuke" as well as encourage (4:2). It might involve him in enduring hardship (4:5) but, no matter, he must stir himself so that he discharges "all the duties of your ministry" (4:8). The gentle, timid Timothy must use those positive traits of his personality to serve his ministry, not to be selective in what he undertakes. So, Timothy's personality needed refinement, as do ours. His personality was a vehicle God could use to communicate to his church and must never be transformed into a stumbling-block instead. As a child of God, made in his image, Timothy was rich in gifts and goodness, yet as a fallen son of Adam, his personality was tainted with sin and in need of sanctification, as are ours.[15]

Let us surrender our personalities into the hands of the master potter, never making them an excuse for our failure to be a worker who has no need to be ashamed but rather "who correctly handles [and preaches] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

CONCLUSION

We end, as we began with Phillips Brooks:

> The sermon is God's message sent by you to certain of your fellow-men. If the message came to your fellow men just as it came from God it must be absolutely true and must have absolute authority. If the fallible messenger mixes himself with his infallible message, the absolute authority of his message is in some degree qualified. But we have seen that the very idea of the sermon implies that the messenger must mingle himself with the message that he brings….[16]

Such is the risk God takes in using us. Such is the ambiguity we face as his messengers. If we dare speak for God, let us prepare both our sermons and ourselves with great care.

NOTES

1. Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (London: Allenson & Co, 1877), 5.
2. *Ibid*.
3. David Wells, *Losing our Virtue: Why the Church Must Recover its Moral Virtue* (Leicester: IVP, 1998), 98. See further pp. 96-103 and James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 7-8; 69-70.
4. In fact, personality and character may not be as disconnected form each other as is often assumed. Certain virtues favour certain personality traits and discourage others.
5. H. J. Eysenck and M. W. Eysenck, *Personality and Individual Differences: A Natural Science Approach* (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), contains the fruit of much previous research and theorizing.
6. P. T. Costa and R. R. McCrae, *The NEO Personality Inventory* (Odessa, Psychological Assessment Resources, 1985).
7. Leslie J Francis and Andrew Village, *Preaching with all our Souls: A study of hermeneutics and psychological type* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008).
8. Francis and Village, *Preaching with all our Souls,* 135-144.
9. Charles Spuregon's *Lectures to My Students* (various editions) are worth reading on this, as on a host of other issues. He addresses it in his chapter on "The Call to Ministry."
10. This framework is very much in the public domain but may have been initially proposed by an industrial psychologist, Dr. David Merrill.
11. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 6.
12. Greidnaus, *Modern Preacher,* 15, John R. W. Stott, *I Believe in Preaching* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982), 125-33 and Haddon Robinson *Expository Preaching: Principles and Practice* (Leicester: IVP, 1980), 18-29.

13. Brooks, *Lectures*, 116.
14. An unsurpassed study of this issue is found in Gregory the Great's *Book of Pastoral Rule* in which he examines in depth thirty-six types of contrasting church members, demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of each member of the pair rather than superficially applauding one and criticizing the other.
15. This sentence echoes what the Lausanne Covenant says in clause 10 about human culture.
16. Brooks, *Lectures,* 122.

WISDOM INCARNATE: PREACHING PROVERBS 31

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ABSTRACT: Proverbs 31:10-31, a favorite Mother's Day sermon text, is often interpreted as an appendix to Proverbs which teaches the role of women and presents a model of godly femininity. This article challenges that interpretation by considering the passage carefully in light of its immediate context, its function in the book of Proverbs, and its place in the canon of Scripture. The author contends that this passage should be preached as an integral part of the Bible's wisdom literature, addressed to all who need to grow in competence, character and an appreciation of the practical wisdom of others.

INTRODUCTION

"Do you want to be at church today?" Nancy[1] asked me one spring Sunday morning, "Because I don't!" She explained, "Today is Mother's Day. They'll give us flowers, and then the pastor will preach about Proverbs 31, and he'll make us feel guilty and inadequate."

Proverbs 31:10-31 is often treated in preaching and commentaries as an appendix tacked onto the back of the book and designed to teach women their role and responsibilities. Nancy has heard this message every Mother's Day since childhood. Preachers who favor traditional roles for women stress the wife's many domestic contributions in the passage, and the less traditional point out her competence in import and trade (verses 14, 18 and 24), real estate (verse 16), and teaching (verse 26). But either way, it is assumed that the passage is intended to define ideal womanhood. However, when we consider the contexts of Proverbs 31:10-31, we discover a message that is significantly different than the one Nancy has been hearing.

APPRECIATING WISDOM IN THE CONTEXT OF PROVERBS 31

The compilers of the book of Proverbs were careful to introduce each section of the book with an acknowledgement of the source of the proverbs contained therein.[2] Many commentators assume that Proverbs 31:10-31 is an exception because, as an acrostic poem, it constitutes a distinct unit, and also

because its vocabulary and style are radically different from the vocabulary and style of verses 2-9.

There are at least six reasons to question the validity of this assumption. First, the sources mentioned in the collection's section headings were sometimes themselves compilers who collected sayings from oral or written sources.[3] If this were so in the case if Proverbs 31, differences of vocabulary and style would be easily explained. Second, the heading clearly states that both Lemuel and his mother were involved in the transmission of the sayings, and therefore one would expect contrasting styles. Third, without verses 10-31 the King Lemuel wisdom collection is extremely short: less than half the length of the brief Agur collection which precedes it, has a similar heading, and is also characterized by contrasting vocabulary and style.[4] With verses 10-31 included, the Lemuel and Agar collections are of a similar length. Fourth, there are two other collections in the book of Proverbs which conclude with acrostic poems.[5] Fifth, if verses 10-31 are not part of the sayings passed down by King Lemuel, this is the only passage in the entire book that is not included in a labeled collection. Sixth, verses 10-31 make the most sense when understood as the words of a mother spoken to her influential son.

The possibility that this text is about King Lemuel and his wife is not negated by the fact that the husband sits in the gates among the elders, nor that the wife and her maids engage in domestic chores such as spinning. Nothing is known of King Lemuel outside Proverbs 31, and he may well have been the "king" of a small city-state, like the four "kings" who were defeated in battle by Abraham's household army of 318 (Genesis 14). He would have been a petty vassal of the great King Solomon, paying hefty tribute. If he were the king of Massa (a possible but uncertain reading of verse 1), then he oversaw an Ishmaelite tribe in northern Arabia, a region not known for sophistication, wealth or large urban centers.

The interpretation of verses 10-31 in the remainder of this article is written on the supposition that the narrator is the mother of Lemuel. However, much of what follows stands whether or not my premise is correct, because the Proverbs in general address young male nobility or princes from the perspective of a wise parent.

The queen mother raises[6] four issues related to the morality and honor of her son, considering his role as a civic leader: womanizing (verse 3), heavy drinking (verses 5-7), upholding justice on behalf of the poor (verse 8-9), and showing honor to his competent wife (10-31). The pleading tone of verse 2 strongly suggests that the mother of Lemuel believes him to fall short of wisdom in these matters.[7]

Verses 10-31 are comprised largely of a glowing description of the accomplishments, hard work, graces and competencies of one married woman. In the Proverbs positive descriptions are often presented as a model of wisdom to people in particular situations or stations in life, and this no doubt explains why so many assume that the passage is meant as advice to

women on how to be good wives. However, the approach and content of 31:10-31 call this interpretation into question.

The poem is 100% positive about this woman, without a hint of the wise/foolish contrast which characterizes a great many of the Biblical proverbs.[8] There are no warnings or commands addressed to any female. The beginning and end of the poem make it clear that the intended recipient of this wisdom is not the woman described (nor women in general). The writer starts the poem with a question: who can find a capable wife?[9] The man needs a life partner whom he can trust and from whom he can benefit (verse 11-12). Yet the passage is not advising a young man on the qualities he should look for in a potential wife, since the man in question is already married, patterns of home life have been established, and there are children who are old enough to bless their mother. The purpose of the poem becomes clear at its conclusion: this man has found wisdom in the person of his wife, and she deserves to be appreciated, praised and given her due (verse 28-31). The only commands in the entire poem come in the last verse: "Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate" (verse 31). This pair of exhortations is probably directed to the husband and children, since they have just been brought into the poem in the lines immediately preceding and since they are in the best position to reward the work which she does, much of which is for the benefit of the family. The final salvo is reserved for the husband, who sits at the city gate (verse 23).

Lemuel's mother seems to think more highly of her daughter-in-law than of her son. In contrast to the immoral and corrupt king with a drinking problem, the queen consort is a paragon of industry, skill and dignity. The queen mother knows that her son has found a gem of a wife, and she is distressed that her son is oblivious to his spouse's abilities, self-sacrifice, virtues and positive impact on his comfort, status and well-being.[10] Therefore, she enumerates his wife's capabilities and qualities and lauds her as utterly trustworthy (verses 11-12).[11] The immediate context of the poem of the competent wife makes it clear, then, that it is first about Lemuel being a more appreciative husband.

WISDOM INCARNATE IN THE CONTEXT OF PROVERBS AND OLD TESTAMENT WISE WOMEN

Far from being an "oh, and by the way" memo to the ladies, Proverbs 31:10-31 is a carefully chosen conclusion to the book of Proverbs. Although she is described partially in terms of typical domestic duties and contributions,[12] the subject of the poem exemplifies many of the behaviors and qualities which the Proverbs repeatedly prescribe for anyone who wishes to be wise: industry, faithfulness, foresight, compassion, wise speech, and the fear of the Lord. The wife of King Lemuel was an exemplary person from whom all men and women can learn about godly, practical, self-sacrificing wisdom.[13]

Even more striking is the way in which the introductory section of Proverbs and the final chapter of the book act as bookends for the volume as a whole. Proverbs begins with a royal father's appeal to his son to gain wisdom and his panegyric to wisdom personified as a woman. It ends with a royal mother's appeal to her son to learn wisdom and her panegyric to a woman who personifies wisdom.

Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law together reflect the wisdom described in the introductory chapters. Lemuel's mother is the voice of the anxious parent who sees the folly of her son's ways. Like Solomon, she cries out with longing for her royal son to benefit from her insights, warns him that adultery leads to ruin, and commands him to do justice and shun corruption. She concludes by urging him to prize wisdom in the feminine.

Lemuel's wife is the embodiment of the wisdom enjoined in the introductory chapters (and indeed, the whole book). She fears the Lord (1:7; 9:10; 31:30) and creates a safe home environment by her wisdom (1:33, 4:6, 31:11-25). She is precious like wisdom (2:4, 3:13-15, 4:7, 8:11, 31:10). Her wisdom gains for her wealth, honor, and divine and human approval, (3:4 and 16, 8:17-21, 31:21-24 and 28-31). She gives and does not withhold, and she deserves to be treated in the same way (3:27, 31:15, 20-25 and 31). This extraordinary woman is available to advise a man in a position of public responsibility, and her wisdom brings him honor (4:8-9, 8:14-16, 31:23 and 26). She is not lazy, but prepares for the lean winter months (6:6-11, 31:21, 25 and 27). She incarnates wisdom and is therefore worthy of recognition at the city gate (1:20-21, 8:1-3, 31:31).

Not only does Lemuel's capable wife embody wisdom: she also negates the negative descriptions of the woman Folly in the opening collection of Proverbs. Unlike Folly, she gives thought to her way of life (5:6, 31:16-18 and 26-27). Her wardrobe is dignified, not like a prostitute (7:10, 31:25). Folly neglects her home and wanders about seeking illegitimate pleasures (7:10-12), but the wife of Lemuel both works hard in her home (31:15, 19 and 22) and ventures beyond it for the good of her family and society (31:14, 18 and 24). Her bed coverings are an asset to her marriage (31:22-23), in contrast with the bed coverings of the adulteress (7:15-20), and unlike the adulteress (7:18-20), she can be safely trusted (31:11-12). The wayward Lemuel could be tempted by the beauty and charm of Folly, but his appreciation should be for his wife and her fear of the Lord (6:25, 31:3 and 30). It should be evident, then, that Proverbs 31 aptly concludes a book that prescribes and describes practical wisdom, and is not merely an appendix or "epilogue."[14]

The book of Proverbs is only one example of the rich and diverse wisdom tradition which runs through much of the Old Testament. One current of this stream is the tradition of the wise woman, a tradition which reached its peak during the period of the United Monarchy. Because the Hebrew for "wisdom" is feminine, descriptions of wisdom were written in the feminine, and wisdom came to be personified as a woman.[15] In addition, women were seen as valuable sources of wisdom, and the "wise woman" had a recognized,

if unofficial, role in society. The wise woman of Tekoa (2 Samuel 14:1-20) and the wise woman of Abel Beth Maacah (2 Samuel 20:14-22) are two examples of women of influence during the reign of David. Both Lemuel's mother and his wife are models of feminine wisdom, each in her own style.[16] Although the voice of women in the ancient world was muted because of patriarchal systems which excluded them from most formal positions of power, there was a tradition associated with the Davidic dynasty which recognized that the wisdom of godly women brought invaluable benefit to society. The acrostic poem with which the book of Proverbs concludes reminds the reader that such women deserve to be recognized and publically appreciated.

ANTICIPATING THE WISDOM INCARNATE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE

Jesus claimed that the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to Himself. It is hard to imagine how this could be true of Proverbs 31:10-31 if this part of the Scriptures is meant to define ideal womanhood.[17] If, however, it is intended to show wisdom "with skin on," then this Old Testament passage serves as one of many that throw light on the greatness of Jesus, "who has become for us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Lemuel's mother says nothing about her daughter-in-law's faults. This poem is like a hymn, pointing to a nameless woman's greatness and godliness. Allen P. Ross points out a number of parallels between this panegyric and biblical psalms of praise.[18] He concludes, "It is clear that Proverbs 31 is patterned after the hymn to extol the works of wisdom."[19] As we have already noted, it is a counterpart to the description of wisdom in Proverbs 8, seen by many theologians throughout Christian history as pointing to the flawless Christ.[20]

It does not matter that there are differences in the specific activities between the wife of Lemuel and the Lord Jesus. One could hardly find a greater contrast between the opulent lifestyle of the polygamist King Solomon and the ministry of the humble, celibate, itinerant preacher Jesus. Yet one of the roles Solomon plays in the Bible is to point by his wisdom to One "greater than Solomon" (Matthew 12:42). In the same way, the admirable wife of Lemuel points to the superior strength, wisdom and self-sacrifice of Jesus, about whom it was said that "he has done everything well" (Mark 7:37).[21] Like the wife of Lemuel, Jesus is precious and entirely to be trusted. He brings good and not harm. During his life on earth, He woke early and stayed up late to serve others. Despite His status, no job was beneath His dignity. He was known for his compassion for the poor and the wise and faithful instruction that was on His tongue. His appeal was not in physical attractiveness (Isaiah 53:2), but in His fear of the Lord. And although He deserved to be recognized and honored in the place of judgment among His people, He was not so acknowledged. The extraordinary woman of Proverbs 31 labored and sacrificed herself for the well-being of her household and the

poor around her, but Jesus labored and sacrificed Himself for His enemies. Lemuel's wife ensured through her wisdom that her royal family was safe during the winter, but Jesus secured eternal salvation for people of every status around the globe. She is worthy of praise in the gates of her city (and in the canon of Scripture), but He is worthy of the praise of all things in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

APPROPRIATE HOMILETICAL USE OF PROVERBS 31:10-31

It is a tragedy that in many churches sermons about wise women are reserved only for women's meetings and Mother's Day, as though the men have nothing to learn from even the most prudent of the female sex. The concrete examples of the strength and skill of Lemuel's wife are not meant to be prescriptive in the sense that we try to mimic her actions (such as selecting flax, distributing food to the maids, spinning, dressing one's family in red clothing, or manufacturing and selling underclothing and belts). These examples are paradigmatic, in that they demonstrate in practice what it meant for one historical person to be characterized by the virtues the Proverbs urge on all who would be wise: hard work, skill, thoughtfulness, foresight, dignity, compassion, gracious speech and knowledge. The principles remain the same, but the specifics will vary depending on the culture of the times and whether the learner of wisdom is a single male stockbroker, a married woman soldier, or a widowed migrant with small children. No doubt the text can teach both women and men to be better parents and spouses. It can help both men and women to be diligent pastors or artists, athletes or advocates for the poor. It is the task of the pastor-teacher to appeal to the congregation to listen to the voice of wisdom and to help each one discover what it means for him or her to personify wisdom in the circumstances of daily life and relationships.

The gospel of Jesus in no way lessens the urgency of this message, but intensifies it. All of the Lord's disciples are graciously called to walk in the wisdom of the cross, giving themselves to God and others in a life of creative, vigorous work and self-sacrifice. In doing so, we demonstrate the life and wisdom of Jesus in us, because He lived, exerted Himself and died on our behalf. In doing so, we also follow the example of the many heroes of the faith whose wisdom, strength, compassion and industry have become our heritage, people like Ruth, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Paul, Dorcas, and Aquila and Priscilla.

Content and context raise questions about preaching this poem as a Mother's Day text. Aside from verse 28, the poem mentions nothing specifically about the woman's relationship with her children. The passage was certainly not originally penned in praise of motherhood.[22] It should never be used to manipulate female congregants into the lifestyle of the preacher's choice, or to make women feel unproductive because they don't measure up to a superwoman model. The purpose of Mother's Day is to honor mothers,

not to demoralize them. Below are some alternative homiletic settings for the passage, any of which might provide fresh insights from this widely misunderstood text.

The text should be preached as part of the wisdom literature of the Bible, for that is what it is. Lemuel's wife is a model of good judgment for all. A preacher could *conclude a sermon series on the Proverbs* with this text, easily allowing it to recap and reinforce the book's message of practical wisdom, strengthen the congregation to resist acedia,[23] and urge self-evaluation based on the text: could someone write a poem like this about me?

Proverbs 31:1-10 could serve as part of *a series on wise people of the Bible*, a part in which Lemuel's wife is held up as a model of Biblical wisdom. This segment of the series would focus on the practical and self-sacrificial nature of wisdom incarnate, and either this sermon or the series as a whole could dialog with of the wisdom of Christ and that enjoined by Him and the apostles.

This poem might become *the basis for an Appreciation Day homily*. It models appropriate praise for human beings whose fear of the Lord inspires them to develop their competencies and invest their lives for the good of those around them. Lemuel's wife performs many of the mundane and often-unappreciated services required in any congregation: effectively managing property and finances, ensuring the beauty and smooth functioning of shared space, overseeing workers, meeting practical needs and undertaking benevolent ministries, and training others in wisdom. Just as Wisdom personified in the first collection of the book of Proverbs cries out and invites all people to gain insight from her, so Lemuel's mother in the last collection cries out for her son (and we who read her words) to applaud wisdom when it walks among us in flesh and blood.

The final chapter of Proverbs also has much *to teach about hard work, justice and appreciation in marriage and family life*. In light of its role as the conclusion of the book, its message is *not* that women should work hard and sacrifice themselves and men verbally pat them on the head every now and again in return. The book of Proverbs calls to men as well as women to build up their homes through foresight, strength, skill and industry, and calls "blessed" anyone who does so. Furthermore, in cultural contexts where the media portrays sarcasm and clever barbs as normal conversation among friends and partners, people of both genders are starved for recognition and affirmation in the most intimate of their relationships. I once concluded a women's Bible study on Proverbs 31 by daring the women to re-write the text for their husbands. However, in cultures where women are seen as secondary and their prudence is downplayed or taken for granted, Lemuel lives and still needs his mother's gender-specific instructions about giving a wise wife the credit she deserves, [24] while women will gain confidence from being introduced to this outstanding example of the Bible's wise women.

CONCLUSION

Have we let Nancy off the hook? Will she now be able to relax through sermons on Proverbs 31? No, and yes. No, because Proverbs 31 challenges all woman to be stronger, wiser, more competent and more self-giving. Nothing in this article detracts from that message. But yes, because if Nancy's male pastor handles the passage well, he will be preaching to himself and to the men and children of the congregation, as well as to Nancy and the other women. He will not be judging Nancy and questioning her womanhood if she fails to imitate the specific activities of Lemuel's wife, but will question the wisdom of anyone, regardless of gender, marital status, or age, who does not reflect that competent lady's character. And he will be sure to praise publically and heartily all those who do reflect her character, regardless of their gender, marital status or age.

The fact that Proverbs 31 was passed on by King Lemuel suggests that he eventually listened to his mother and learned to value the wisdom of his wife. The one who preaches Proverbs 31 as a fellow-student with Lemuel at the feet of Wisdom will have a year-round message which is both challenging and edifying for everyone.

NOTES

1. Not her real name.
2. These headings are found in 1:1, 10:1, 22:17, 24:23, 25:1, 30:1 and 31:1.
3. Ecclesiastes 12:9 sheds light on the way the wise put together collections of proverbs. On oral transmission of proverbs, see Henning Graf Reventlow, "Modern Approaches to Old Testament Theology," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Leo G. Perdue (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 425.
4. The "Further Sayings of the Wise" collection (24: 23-34), only 12 verses long, appears to be a continuation of the collection of Sayings of the Wise which begins at 22:17.
5. Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "Proverbs 29:22-27: Another Unnoticed Alphabetic Acrostic," *JSOT* 92, (2001): 121-125. In addition to this passage and 31:10-31, Hurowitz identifies 24:1-22 as an acrostic poem and points out that *Ben Sira* 51:13-30 fits the same pattern.
6. While other passages in the book of Proverbs urge young people to heed the wisdom of their mothers (1:8, 6:20), this is the only passage in which the speaker is explicitly acknowledged to be a woman.
7. There is no historical record of any king by the name Lemuel, and some have suggested that the name was chosen for its similarity to the Hebrew for "fool."
8. Contrast, for instance, 14:1.
9. The Hebrew word here (*chayil*), when referring to men, has been variously translated "able", "mighty", "strong", "valiant", or "worthy". It suggests strength, competency and even greatness. Without any lexical

basis, traditional translators have modified the meaning to "virtuous" for the four instances in which it refers to women (Ruth 3:11; Proverbs 12:4; 31:10,29). This says more about what the translators considered the feminine ideal than what the writers of Scripture intended.

10. I take verses 28 and 29 to be suggestive of what *should* be rather than descriptive of what is, since the point of the entire poem is to point out this woman's value to those who don't appreciate her enough, and also because of the commands in the last verse. The mother of Lemuel coaches him in praising his wife appropriately, putting words into his mouth.
11. Although it is possible that this refers to sexual fidelity, the majority of the verses which follow portray the wife as being trustworthy when it comes to money management and hard work. Bruce K. Waltke concludes that the woman of Prov 31:10-31 is the primary breadwinner of the family: Bruce K. Waltke, "The Role of the Valiant Wife in the Marketplace," *Crux*, 35:3 (1999): 23-34. It was not uncommon for husbands to make use of their wives wealth (Christine Roy Yoder, "The Woman of Substance: A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 31:10-31," *JBL* 122/3 (2003): 427-447). The mother may be appealing to her son and grandchildren to stop exploiting the wife's earnings when she urges him, "Give her the reward she has earned!"
12. However, aside from spinning, godly men in the Bible engage in every other activity for which Lemuel's wife is praised, and some do so at the command of God.
13. So exemplary is the wife of Proverbs 31 that many of the church fathers concluded she must represent *the* wife, the church as the bride of Christ. See J. R. Wright, ed., *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Old Testament IX, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2005), 184-189. Thanks to Riad Kassis for drawing my attention to this tradition.
14. This is the NIV section heading. For further evidence for the unity of chapter 31 and its integration with the book of Proverbs, see Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "The Seventh Pillar: Reconsidering the Literary Structure and Unity of Proverbs 31," *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 113:2 (2001): 209-218.
15. One must be careful not to use this as evidence of biblical support for the idea that women are innately wiser than men. "Folly" (Proverbs 9:13) and "wickedness" (Zechariah 5:7-8) are also personified as women, for the same reason.
16. The mother of Lemuel may also belong to the prophetic tradition if the debated translation "an oracle" is the correct in Proverbs 31:1 (compare 30:1).
17. Granted, it is not necessarily the case that every single passage of the Old Testament points to Jesus. However, Proverbs 31:10-31 is (as I have argued) the concluding summary of the book of Proverbs.
18. Allen P. Ross in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary,* vol. 5, ed. Frank E. Gae-

belein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 1129-1130.

19. Ibid.
20. Unfortunately, a review of this extended and fascinating discussion is far beyond the scope of the present article.
21. The superiority of Jesus is due, not to his gender, but to his sinlessness and his being God incarnate.
22. Prov 31:1-9 might be more appropriate on this occasion.
23. For a profound discussion of acedia in daily life, see Kathleen Norris, *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life* (London: Penguin Books, 2008).
24. The preacher should bear in mind, however, that marriage and childbirth do not *necessarily* make a woman wise, and there may be men in the congregation who find themselves mated for life with mediocre, incompetent, or even foolish partners.

ALL GOOD PROPHETS ARE FALSE PROPHETS

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ABSTRACT: The prophets of Israel sometimes spoke as if judgment was inevitable: no summons to repentance was issued, no offer of grace hinted at. This mode of speech can be understood theologically—all prophecy is conditional—and in terms of speech act theory—a speech strategy intended to undo the results predicted. Might this mode of speech be legitimately used by gospel preachers today?

INTRODUCTION

One notable feature of the preaching of Israel's prophets is how often their sermons sound like inexorable verdicts. No hope is offered that punishment might be forestalled, no mercy is promised those who repent—in fact, no call to repentance is issued at all. What's the point, since judgment is inevitable? These oracles do not warn or threaten, they simply announce judgment; and "the announcement of judgment has the character of something settled: God has decided upon doom. The announcement itself is part of the sentence that has been decided upon by God. It is something essentially different from a threat."[1]

For Claus Westermann, this "announcement of judgment" is not a rhetorical rarity or an experiment in homiletical virtuosity, but one of the "*basic* forms of prophetic speech." It is characteristic of prophetic preaching. Indeed, we do not have to look far in the prophetic literature to find these gloomy oracles. On page after page, God's spokesmen remind Israel and Judah of the sins for which God is about to judge them and then pronounce that judgment.

And yet, no one can read the prophets and get the impression that they were indifferent to their listeners' response. "Repent," they say (Ezek. 14:6), "flee" (Jer. 6:1), "obey" (Jer. 11:4), "listen" (Jer. 6:17), "reform your ways" (Jer. 18:11), "listen to the words of this covenant and follow them" (Jer. 11:6), "pay attention" (Jer. 13:15), "stop" (Isa. 1:13), "awake, O Zion" (Isa. 52:1), "wail" (Ezek. 30:2), "put on sackcloth" (Joel 1:13), "rend your heart' (Joel 2:13), and "seek the Lord while he may be found" (Isa. 55:6).[2]

It is difficult to see why Donald Gowan says there are "few admonitions (appeals for change connected with a promise) in the prophetic books."[3] Gowan cites Amos as his primary example, but Amos is the extreme case. And, "Even Amos, the gloomiest of the prophets, does not simply

announce the judgment in order that people might know the reasons for it when it comes."[4] Amos entreats his people: "Seek me and live," "Seek the Lord and live," "Seek good, and not evil, that you may live" (5:4, 6, 14).

The prophets longed for listeners to be moved. How else can we explain the earnestness of their preaching? They begged, pleaded, implored, and wept. They used object lessons. Sometimes they *were* the object lessons: Their personal lives became enacted parables—unorthodox, painful, sometimes humiliating—meant to reinforce their spoken words. If all the prophets wanted to do was announce a verdict, we might expect their books to be plainer and less passionate. Not to mention shorter! After all, a guilty verdict doesn't require a lot of fancy words. But the sheer massiveness and literary artistry of the prophetic material is evidence that these preachers hoped for response.

How, then, do we explain the oracles which sound as if there's no chance of repentance and mercy? Were these preachers confused, inconsistent, sometimes thinking that God's mind was made up, sometimes hoping their sermons might make a difference?

The answer, I think, can be found in theology and in speech act theory. It is an answer not of mere historical interest, but one relevant to contemporary preachers.

THE ANSWER OF THEOLOGY: PROPHECY IS CONDITIONAL

The prophets knew (some more clearly than others) that prophecy is conditional. Even when conditions are not explicitly stated, even when the form of the oracle does not indicate alternative possibilities, God is sovereign—even over his own word—so that blessing or cursing previously announced may be reversed, depending on how human beings respond.

God's promise to the house of Eli, for example, sounded inviolable, but God "changed his mind" and deposed that faithless family (1 Samuel 3). Isaiah told Hezekiah he was going to die, but God added fifteen years to his life (2 Kings 20:1-6). Ezekiel knew that life and death are not inexorable fates, since God weighs sin and repentance in deciding a man's future (Ezekiel 18).

The opening oracle of Zechariah confirms the expectation that pre-exilic prophecies—including, presumably, the announcements of judgment—were meant to persuade:

> Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices." But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the LORD (Zech. 1:2-4).

This oracle came long after most of the prophets and their audiences were dead and gone. Now God is inviting the remnant to learn from centuries

of preaching when their forefathers might have repented but *"would not."* If there was anything inevitable about the non-repentance and captivity of Judah, we won't find it in Zechariah's sermon: "When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen, says the LORD Almighty" (Zech 7:13). God's people *might* have been persuaded, they *should* have been persuaded, but they were *not* persuaded.[5]

What Sidney Greidanus says with reference to Amos's dire prophecies applies to other prophetic oracles as well:

> Even if one concludes . . . that the evidence in Amos points to the inevitability of God's judgment, one must remember that the inevitability is rooted not in God's word of judgment but in the obstinacy of the people who fail to mend their ways. Thus, even when the judgment appears inevitable, its announcement as such is still conditional.[6]

God made this principle plain to Jeremiah: "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down, or destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it" (Jer. 18:7-10).

If that text is the clearest articulation of the principle, the outstanding instance of the principle at work is the revocation of Nineveh's doom. "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed," Jonah said (Jonah 3:4). Yet, when that city repented, saying "Who knows? God may yet relent," God "had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened" (Jonah 3:9-10). Jonah knew very well that prophecy is conditional, and complained bitterly that repentance was precisely the outcome he feared in the first place (4:2).

Terry Eagleton, commenting on God's sparing of Nineveh, suggests that: "all good prophets are false prophets, undoing their own utterances in the very act of producing them."[7] All good prophets are false prophets? An intriguing irony, since one mark of a false prophet was that his predictions failed to come true (Deut. 18:22). Yet true prophets must have sometimes *hoped* that their predictions of judgment did not come true.

THE ANSWER OF SPEECH ACT THEORY: DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE AND THE PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECT OF SENTENCES

We need not delve too deeply into the complexities of speech act theory to grasp the distinction between the form a speech act takes and its intended effect. J.L Austin coined the adjective "illocutionary" to refer

to the form or conventional significance of a kind of statement: a sentence may promise or warn or threaten or adjourn or do any number of things. The "perlocutionary" effect of the sentence signifies its impact: convincing, surprising, reassuring, or what have you.[8] "Obviously the illocutionary force of an utterance may be a significant factor in its perlocutionary effect. One may convince by argument, intimidate by threats, astonish by assertion, reassure by a promise. Some perlocutionary effects are very closely associated with particular illocutionary acts, as, for example, keeping a promise is with promising."[9]

However, there is no *necessary* link between the illocutionary force of a particular form of statement and its perlocutionary effect. Consider, for example, a parent's statement made on a long road trip: "All right children, you've had all the warnings you're going to get. Now I have to punish you when we get home." This sentence does not take the form of a warning (the children have had all the warnings they're going to get); rather, it has the illocutionary force of a verdict. But the parent's intention may in fact be that the statement function as one last warning. Perhaps *now* the children will shape up. The strategy may or may not work, but the outcome doesn't change its perlocutionary intent.

When it comes to understanding judgment pronouncements in the prophetic literature, theology and speech act theory coincide, as may be seen in a fuller citation of Terry Eagleton:

> . . . all good prophets are false prophets, undoing their own utterances in the very act of producing them. In the terms of J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words,* prophetic utterances of Jonah's sort are "constative" (descriptive of some real or possible state of affairs) only in what one might call their surface grammar; as far as their "deep structure" goes they actually belong to Austin's class of "performatives," linguistic acts which get something done. What they get done is to produce a state of affairs in which the state of affairs they describe won't be the case. Effective declarations of imminent catastrophe cancel themselves out, containing as they do a contradiction between what they say and what they do.[10]

As Donald Leggett puts it, "When the prophets announce disaster their announcements themselves are exhortations to repentance."[11]

SHOULD GOSPEL PREACHERS SPEAK IN THIS MODE?

Is it ever appropriate for Christian ministers to preach in the "announcement of judgment mode?" To preach without calling for repentance, without explicitly offering hope for the penitent, but simply sounding the cannons of God's law and trusting that hearers will be shocked, shamed, or warned into response of some kind?

Our instinctive reply might be "no." We're called to preach the gospel, not teach the law. We're heralds of hope, not doom. Haven't we been taught "no summons, no sermon?" And wouldn't a sermon with no explicit offer of grace be a travesty of authentic Christian preaching? Despite these reservations, maybe we should consider the possibility that sometimes the announcement of judgment mode might be a grace-filled and persuasive strategy, and thus a viable strategy for Christian homiletics.

Before arguing my case, I need to clarify what I *do not* mean. I do not mean that we should try to hoodwink listeners into rendering dire predictions unnecessary ("If you don't donate enough money by the end of the month God is going to kill me!"). I don't mean that when we take a doom oracle for a sermon text we preach as if our burden is identical with the prophet's or that our listeners' situation is the same as that of the first hearers of the oracle. Clearly, a huge gap in time, culture, and dispensation calls for adjustment in how these texts are preached and heard.

Nor do I mean that we should pronounce specific judgment upon our churches or culture as if we have a direct "Thus says the Lord" like the inspired prophets. In 1993 the Mississippi River flooded its banks, causing billions of dollars worth of damage. Two prominent preachers viewed the disaster as divine judgment—bu for very different reasons. Randall Terry of Operation Rescue linked the floods to liberalized abortion, while on the same day in a different city Jesse Jackson cited racism as the cause for judgment. Now, theoretically, these two "prophets" might both be right; but given their political and theological differences, they would presumably discredit each other's accounting for the floods. The point is that unless God directly reveals his mind to us, we should be careful about interpreting His providence. It is one thing to say, in general, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men" (Rom. 1:18); it's another thing to say that this flood or that disease is God's judgment for this or that particular sin.

What I do mean by suggesting that the announcement of judgment mode might be an acceptable strategy for contemporary preachers is that sometimes we should let the judging word of God do its convicting work without rushing to soften it with *premature* words of grace and hope. If every time we say "God hates divorce," we hasten to add "but God forgives divorce;" if we say "God's judgment is coming" and never allow time for the words to sink in before we follow up with an escape route; if our convicting diagnosis, "Many of us are serving idols of the heart, idols doomed for destruction," has barely been uttered before we segue into a kinder, gentler conclusion, the unintended response of our hearers may be, "Oh well then, there's nothing to worry about."

As I've matured as a pastor and preacher, I'm less concerned than I used to be about preaching "balanced" sermons. I'm more inclined to let my text speak *its* word and let another text another week bring the needed balancing word. If every sermon says "on the one hand . . . but on the other

hand," they all start to sound alike, and good strong texts are emasculated. Sometimes it's better to preach the "problem" today and the "solution" another time, letting listeners squirm a bit in between.

Such a strategy may seem risky. What if some don't return next Sunday for the more hopeful sermon planned for that morning? Once during a week of evangelistic meetings, Dwight L. Moody dismissed the crowd without an invitation, intending to issue one the following evening. But the great Chicago fire intervened, and the next evening's meeting never took place. Moody fretted that some who were in the service the night of the fire might never again have such an ideal opportunity to be saved, and resolved to never again end a sermon without extending an invitation to trust Christ.

I feel the force of his experience. But I also wonder if we should trust God's sovereignty for those who attend what meetings, who hears which sermons, and how the Spirit might work to bring people to faith in his own time and apart from our instrumentality. Jesus, the greatest of the prophets, was willing to "risk" finishing conversations without "sealing the deal." His parables are for the most part open-ended, with no explicit "summons." They leave listeners time to reflect and respond—later, if at all. If Jesus was concerned that some people might walk away undecided as to what to do with what they'd heard, he didn't seem to let that concern govern his rhetorical strategy.

I once heard a sermon on Jesus' parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:23-35). The preacher—faithful to his text, I think—ended on a sobering note: "If I understand Jesus correctly, what he's saying here is 'If you want God to forgive you but you won't forgive others, you can go to hell'." Is that any way to end a sermon: "you can go to hell?" Well, maybe. "All good prophets are false prophets, undoing their utterances in the very act of producing them." This preacher fervently hoped that that no one in the congregation would perish everlastingly; he hoped that people would forgive one another from the heart. But he trusted the parable's "deep structure" to perform as Jesus intended.

The Sermon on the Mount provides another example of how preaching might elicit response without explicitly mentioning grace or concluding with a summons. In that sermon, Jesus sets an impossibly high standard of righteousness, a righteousness surpassing that of the scribes and Pharisees, without which righteousness no one can enter the kingdom. When we preach the Sermon on the Mount today, we typically preach it through a Pauline lens, pointing out that the righteousness which cannot be achieved may nevertheless be received as a free gift. That's true, but it's worth noting that Jesus himself does not do this. His sermon ends with neither summons nor grace—or at least neither summons nor grace *explicitly* stated. Surely some people must have heard Jesus preach that afternoon and gone home thinking, "I can't live like that! The Master asks too much! Turn the other cheek? Outdo the Pharisees? Judge not? Be perfect? Impossible!"

Precisely! This was the conviction Jesus sought—that listeners might realize, "If that's the righteousness of the kingdom, then the only way I'm going to get in is by the grace of God!"

Sometimes—as in Paul' exposition of the gospel in Romans—that inference can be drawn out in the sermon itself. Sometimes—as in Jonah's mission to Nineveh, or in many of the prophetic oracles, or in Jesus' own preaching—the inference is to be worked out in listeners' hearts by the Holy Spirit *after* the sermon. The judging word is conditional. The perlocutionary effect is evoked by an illocutionary form that does not, on the face of things, seem to match.

WHEN AND HOW TO PREACH IN THE "ANNOUNCEMENT OF JUDGMENT MODE

Prophets did not always employ the mode we've been considering; often they called for repentance and held out explicit hope that God would relent from bringing about the announced chastening. Why? Why did they preach one way sometimes, another way other times? Perhaps it's not too much of an oversimplification to say that the prophets preached doom in seasons of false hope and preached hope in seasons of unnecessary despair.

And this might help preachers today decide when to employ an announcement of judgment rhetoric. Are we not called to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable?" When our hearers already feel a keen sense of guilt and contrition, that's no time to preach judgment. But if we sense that our people think (wrongly) that all is well in Zion, perhaps it's time to expose the folly of their unexamined idolatries in language as withering as Isaiah's (ch. 44), time to preach, "My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2:13), and not be in too much of a hurry to soften the indictment before the closing hymn.

We want to be careful, if preaching in the announcement of judgment mode, not to do so in a manner that suggests sinister delight in so doing. Prophetic preaching is broken-hearted preaching. Calvin said:

> Let then all teachers in the Church learn to put on these two feelings—to be vehemently indignant whenever they see the worship of God profaned, to burn with zeal for God and to show that severity which appeared in all the prophets . . . and at the same time to sympathize with miserable men, whom they see rushing headlong into destruction, and to bewail their madness and to interpose with God as much as is in them; in such a way, however, that their compassion render them not slothful or indifferent, so as to be indulgent to the sins of men."[12]

Provided we heed Calvin's counsel and the prophets' own example,

provided we take care to use the announcement of judgment mode sparingly and wisely, we may follow the footsteps of those Old Testament giants who were at least sometimes glad to be "false prophets."

NOTES

1. Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 1991), 66.
2. All Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.
3. Donald Gowan, *Reclaiming the Old Testament for the Christian Pulpit* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1980), 123.
4. Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 234.
5. See, too, the comments by the anonymous editor of 2 Kings: The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets. . . . But they would not listen" (2 Kings 17:13-14).
6. Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text,* 234.
7. Terry Eagleton, "J.L. Austin And the Book of Jonah," in R.M. Schwartz, ed., *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 233.
8. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* 2d ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 191-192.
9. Walter Houston, "What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing? Speech Acts and Prophetic Discourse in the Old Testament, in Robert P. Gordon, ed. *The Place is Too Small for Us: The Israelite Prophets in Recent Scholarship* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 138.
10. Eagleton, "J.L. Austin And the Book of Jonah," 233.
11. Donald Leggett, *Loving God and Disturbing Men: Preaching from the Prophets* (Toronto: Clements, 2003), 25.
12. John Calvin, *Twelve Minor Prophets,* Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 329-330.

TOWARDS A HOMILETIC OF SERMON INTERPRETING[1]

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ABSTRACT: While interpreting sermons into other languages has long formed a vital part of Church practice, it has only recently been the subject of academic research and remains on the periphery of homiletical debate. This paper argues for homiletics to pay greater attention to sermon interpreting, not only in the interests of better informed practice, but also because of the vital role of sermon interpreting in multicultural preaching.

INTRODUCTION

The preacher gestures animatedly, using the whap! whap! of his fist against the pulpit to underline each point, then drops to his voice and whispers to the hushed auditorium. He pauses while the interpreter standing alongside him does their best to capture the sense of each sentence in another language, endeavouring to match the intensity of delivery, reproducing changes of voice and gesture and even the jokes. Another day, the interpreter may be sitting in a soundproof booth behind the congregation, straining hard to follow the preacher's train of thought through headphones, attempting to match sense, pace and intensity in the simultaneous interpreting for those listening to it through their own headphones.

In studies of multicultural preaching, mention of the complex role of the sermon interpreter is conspicuously absent[2]. The aim of this paper is therefore to open the way towards a homiletical understanding of interpreting and its application to multilingual and multicultural preaching. First, however, it is necessary to revisit recent assertions that preaching is inherently local and performative since these assertions will be shown to apply equally to sermon interpreting.

HUMAN ACTION, DIVINE POWER, LOCAL THEOLOGY

The view that preaching is inherently local can be traced to the work of Charles Bartow[3], who argued that sermons are grounded in the specific congregation in which they are preached. Sermons therefore cannot be captured in even the best written manuscript but exist only for as long as the preacher continues to speak[4]. The sermon then is fleeting, not fixed, contrary

to what is implied by Abraham Kuruvilla's theorisation of preaching as an act of translation[5] since translation produces a fixed, written text.

The local, ephemeral nature of preaching is at the heart of both its power and danger. It is all too easy for preachers to contextualise their sermons to the point of occluding the message of the text[6]. In this light, it is easy to understand why preaching has been described as "a risk God takes"[7]. It is a risk that defies any theology that sees human action in the sermon as incidental to Divine action[8] or which places human performance at the heart of preaching[9]. The human and Divine are both necessary, just as sermon listeners have been found to feel that connection with the preacher makes it easier to hear God in the sermon[10] and that the perceived integrity of the preacher is as important as the message they bring[11].

Interpreting is fleeting and local too. It is subject to what Miriam Shlesinger has called the "linearity constraint"[12] which means that interpreters, unlike translators, are not free to move around the text to improve their understanding. The solutions they find to whatever problems they face are made in the light of limited evidence and within the limitations of human cognitive capacity[13]. They are also subject to the interpreter's own views and intuition as to what will work for a given congregation on a given day. Jill Karlik and Alev Balci have already argued that church interpreters work in a social world as well as a spiritual one[14]. In this world, decisions must be made as to the possible effects of different parts of the sermon and what interpreting strategies need to be used.

The fleeting, local and limited nature of interpreting might be the source of its lack of popularity among Bible translators. The translators quoted in Jill Karlik's work called the practice of orally interpreting Scripture "the kind of thing we try to avoid", even a "dreadful practice"[15]. Yet, underneath the Septuagint, the first ever written translation of the Old Testament, lies a long history of the Scriptures being interpreted in synagogues by a class of interpreters called "*metourguemanim*"[16]. In such situations, the fleeting, local nature of interpreting was given homiletical importance. The role of the *metourgueman* was, according to interpreting scholar Francine Kaufmann, "to translate the language [of the original text] and interpret its meaning, while bringing to life the message of the divine word, which is eternal by its very essence"[17]. The listeners then heard both the timeless, eternal Word of God and its temporal representation. The fixed text and its temporal performance co-existed, even if only for a moment.

This reveals the potential for a local, fleeting representation of the Scriptures to be a valued and necessary part of the operation of the Church – a role which is shared nowadays by preaching and interpreting alike. If homiletics can paint preaching as local and fleeting, it is drawing features of interpreting too. If Bible translators want to reject interpreted Scripture due to its possibility for inaccuracies, they need to reject preaching too, for the same reasons. Both take the fixed, inspired text and seek to represent it in a way that will be meaningful and usable for a contemporary audience. As

such, they run similar risks.

Distant though interpreters might sometimes be spatially from the pulpit, their work is therefore bound inseparably to it. Theirs is the role of taking what is proclaimed through the preacher and preaching it again, producing something that, for all its power and all its potential, is as temporary and locally-oriented as the sermon on which it is based. However, even this understanding of sermon interpreting is not yet enough, as it still leaves open the question of how to understand the texts produced by interpreters. It is this question I wish to address now.

WHAT ARE PEOPLE HEARING IN SERMON INTERPRETING?

In the light of complexities in the task of sermon interpreting, simplified views of the texts they produce are untenable. Viewing interpreted sermons as either the sermon in a different language or the interpreter's version of it either ignores the complexities of the task in the first case or questions its value in the second. The theological status accorded to interpreted sermons therefore needs to take into account the challenges and potential of this practice, whilst still bearing in mind that it forms a vital part of worship for many congregants.

One promising avenue for resolving the status of the interpreted sermon is found in the work of Cécile Vigouroux. In the church in her study, 'Glory Gospel Church' in Cape Town, South Africa, she found that the role of the interpreter was intimately interwoven with that of the preacher. While the languages spoken in the congregation were Lingala and French, interpreting was provided from French to English[18]. This posed an paradox for the researcher, who sought to understand why interpreting was provided into a language that few in the church spoke fluently, especially given that for those with no knowledge of French, the interpreted sermon was incoherent[19].

Her proposed solution involved widening the focus from the interpreter's place in church services to the place of interpreting in the church as a whole. In interviews with the senior pastor, she discovered that the church had a vision to reach more African communities than simply those who shared their languages. The church had also struggled with recognition in their local community, as it was classified as an "immigrant church" [20]. Providing interpreting in this case served as a performance of both the church's ultimate vision and its openness to English-speakers in the surrounding community. In this light, Vigouroux argues that the sermon and its interpreted version together form a single performance of what God is doing in the church[21]. This single performance involved the preacher and interpreting standing side-by-side on the stage, taking turns to speak and, at times, interacting with each other.

Vigouroux's "single performance hypothesis", as it has been labelled elsewhere[22], therefore provides a valuable starting point for understanding sermon interpreting. It suggests a shift in how the role of interpreters is

understood, placing them as partners with the preacher in the performance of the sermon – "co-preachers" as one church leader called them[23]. It also suggests that interpreting shapes the original sermon too. This is most obvious in cases like those studied by Vigouroux or Karlik, where interpreters stand alongside preachers on the stage. The need for regular pauses to allow the interpreter to work and the ever present possibility that parts of sentences might be missed or require clarification mean that preachers must remain attentive to the needs of their first and closest listener. Having an interpreter on stage also offers scope for preachers to use interpreters as fellow performers or even to act out parts of their sermon with them.

In cases where interpreters work in soundproof booths, the effect of being interpreted is less obvious. For those who share the language of the preacher, the source language audience, it might seem that the interpreter does not exist. For them, listening to a sermon that is being interpreted is no different from one where no interpreters are working. For those listening to the interpreter, the target language audience, however, the situation is likely to be more challenging than it would be if the interpreter were on stage. They will have to cope with seeing one person and hearing another and this hearing will always lag a little behind the words of the preacher, leading to a mismatch between the gestures they see on stage and the timing of the words they hear[24]. Theirs will be the task of working out how to bring these two disparate pieces together.

In either case, the interpreted sermon is not a different sermon or a simple transposition of it but a vital part of its performance. When interpreters work on stage, this status would be evident to both the source and target language audiences. Both groups will see and hear both the interpreter and the preacher. Whatever their level of understanding of the other language, the visual and aural cues supplied by the two performers will come together to form one single sermon performance. When the interpreter works from the booth, only the target audience will receive a single bilingual performance.

The status of sermons interpreted to or from signed languages would depend on the direction of interpreting, as can be seen in the work of Jennifer Rayman[25]. When a signed sermon is interpreted into English, it would seem that the outcome is similar to simultaneous interpreting of spoken languages, albeit in a face-to-face situation. However, when a spoken language sermon is interpreted into a sign language, the outcome may be similar to on stage interpreting of spoken languages, depending on the interpreter's position and the extent to which the preacher involves them in their sermon. In fact, if the interpreter is not directly addressed by the preacher or if they are very distant from the pulpit, the deaf audience may experience the signed sermon as if it was the original sermon.

FROM THEOLOGY TO PRACTICE

The single performance hypothesis therefore holds great potential

as the starting point for a theological understanding of sermon interpreting and for practical guidelines as to how it can be carried out more effectively. In theological terms, seeing the work of interpreting a sermon as a part of the sermon itself not only raises the status of church interpreting but opens up new avenues for homiletics. In this view, multicultural preaching moves from being an outgrowth of the work of the preacher to one that is carried out in partnership with interpreters.

Such a move actually represents the rediscovery of a Biblical practice. In the account of Pentecost in Acts 2: 1-41, Peter's sermon is interpreted into a myriad of foreign languages, foregrounding the universality of God's plan[26]. It is typical to see Pentecost as either a miracle where ecstatic utterances were heard as human ones[27] or as a one-off occurrence of God turning apostles into linguists[28]. However, it's prominence in the Acts narrative and its thematic links with further examples of the barrier-breaking nature of the gospel, such as the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8: 28-40, Peter preaching in the household of Cornelius in Acts 10 and even the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:1-35, suggest instead that it should be read as a declaration of intent as to the nature of the Church. A Church that was born interpreting might need to live by it too.

Placing interpreting at the core of preaching multiculturally therefore foregrounds the multicultural and multilingual nature of the Church. Such an appreciation of interpreting may also be a welcome sign that homiletics can account for changes in contemporary ecclesiology, given the increasingly multicultural nature of contemporary societies. If more and more believers are experiencing interpreted sermons, homiletics will need to build frameworks to understand what this means for preachers and for the interpreters with whom they work.

Describing the status of interpreted sermons as part of the act of preaching also goes hand-in-glove with offering practical guidance. This could begin with interpreters being encouraged to grow as co-preachers, extending to them the same kinds of training and support as are routinely available for preachers. Likewise, preachers could be encouraged to see and treat interpreters as partners in preaching, rather than as conduits through which the sermon gets mysteriously transferred into another language. Simplifying somewhat, this represents a paradigm shift from preaching *through* interpreters to preaching *with* interpreters.

By understanding what is at stake in interpreting and the complex position of interpreters, preachers can also reflect on strategies that make a positive difference to the interpreted sermon. While space does not permit a detailed account of effective preaching strategies when working with interpreters, some simple actions can make a lot of difference. Spending time with interpreters, explaining the central points of the sermon and its rhetorical shape, and asking for interpreters to share their knowledge of their language group can help build partnership. This partnership can be furthered by preachers seeking to understand the cognitive and performative

challenges involved in interpreting[29] and working to attenuate them by, for example, reducing the number of unfinished sentences in the sermon[30].

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to provide some groundwork for a homiletical and practical account of the place of interpreters in the performance of multilingual sermons, a practice that will only become more common as churches are faced with increasingly multicultural communities. It has been argued that only by seeing sermon interpreting as part of preaching can we begin to understand its complexity and importance and open the way for more effective multicultural ministry. By appreciating what it means to preach with an interpreter, we can understand better how to partner with God and the interpreter to reach out to the multitudes around us.

NOTES

1. The author would like to thank Jill Karlik for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper.
2. For instance, in Vic Anderson, "Nuts and Bolts of Culture-Sensitized Sermons," in *Multi-Cultural Preaching* (presented at the 2012 Conference of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, New Orleans, 2012), 12–19.
3. Charles L. Bartow, *God's Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 1, 120.
4. Ibid., 64–65; see also Clayton J. Schmit, "What Comes next? Performing Music and Proclaiming the Word," in *Performance in Preaching*, ed. Jana Childers and Clayton J. Schmit (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 175.
5. Abraham Kuruvilla, "Preaching as Translation via Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 9, no. 1 (March 2009): 85–97.
6. As argued in Walter C. Kaiser Jr, "The Modern Aversion from Authorial Intentionality and from 'Making Points' in a Sermon," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 13, no. 2 (September 2013): 4–11.
7. Alyce M. McKenzie, "At the Intersection of Actio Divina and Homo Performans: Embodiment and Evocation," in *Performance in Preaching*, ed. Jana Childers and Clayton J. Schmit, 2008, 57.
8. For example William H. Willimon, *Conversations with Barth on Preaching* (Abingdon Press, 2006).
9. For example Ronald J. Allen, "Performance and the New Testament in Preaching," in *Performance in Preaching*, ed. Jana Childers and Clayton J. Schmit (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 99–116.
10. Mary Alice Mulligan et al., *Believing in Preaching: What Listeners Hear in Sermons* (Chalice Press, 2005), 69–73.
11. Mary Alice Mulligan and Ronald J. Allen, *Make the Word Come Alive: Lessons from Laity* (Chalice Press, 2005), 15–23.
12. Miriam Shlesinger, "Shifts in Cohesion in Simultaneous Interpreting,"

The Translator 1, no. 2 (1995): 194.

13. See the "Effort Models" presented in Daniel Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*, vol. 8 (John Benjamins Pub Co, 2009).
14. Alev Balci, "Interpreter Involvement in Sermon Interpreting" (Minor Dissertation, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2008); Jill Karlik, "Interpreter-Mediated Scriptures: Expectation and Performance," *Interpreting* 12, no. 2 (2010): 160–85, doi:10.1075/intp.12.2.03kar; "Translation and Performance: Interpreter Mediated Scriptures in Africa," in *Translating Scripture for Sound and Performance*, ed. James Maxey and Ernst Wendland (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2012).
15. Karlik, "Translation and Performance: Interpreter Mediated Scriptures in Africa," 183.
16. Francine Kaufmann, "Contribution À L'histoire de L'interprétation Consécutive : Le Metourguemane Dans Les Synagogues de l'Antiquité," *Meta* 50, no. 3 (2005): 972–86.
17. Ibid., 977 my translation.
18. C. B. Vigouroux, "Double-Mouthed Discourse: Interpreting, Framing, and Participant roles1," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 14, no. 3 (2010): 342.
19. Ibid., 342, 352, 355–356.
20. Ibid., 349.
21. Ibid., 361–364.
22. Jonathan Downie and Graham H. Turner, "Interpreting in Religious Settings, Translation and Interpreting Theory, and Questioning Borders: A Response to Edwin Gentzler," forthcoming.
23. Karlik, "Interpreter-Mediated Scriptures," 167.
24. Jennifer Rayman, "Visions of Equality: Translating Power in a Deaf Sermonette.," *The Sign Language Translator and Interpreter* 1, no. 1 (2007): 73–114 is a particularly striking example.
25. Ibid.
26. See vv. 7-11, 28-39.
27. One example is Frank D. Macchia, "Groans Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Tongues as Initial Evidence," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 1, no. 2 (1998): 149–73.\\uc0\\u8220{}Groans Too Deep for Words: Towards a Theology of Tongues as Initial Evidence,\\uc0\\u8221{} \\i Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies\\i0{} 1, no. 2 (1998
28. For example Robertson, 'Tongues'.
29. The insights found in Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training*, 8:157–217 and ; Franz Pöchhacker, "Coping with Culture in Media Interpreting," *Perspectives* 15, no. 2 (2007): 123–42, doi:10.1080/13670050802153798 form a useful starting place.
30. An early study by the author Jonathan Downie, "Intervention Length and Interpreter Performance in Short Intervention Consecutive Interpreting" (presented at the Translation and Cognition: Fourth Conference of the Nida Institute, Murcia, Spain, 2010) found that unfinished and broken

sentences reduced the ability of an interpreter to adequately interpret a sermon.Spain",",event":"Translation and Cognition: Fourth Conference of the Nida Institute",",event-place":"Murcia, Spain",",author":[{"famil y":"Downie",",given":"Jonathan"}],"issued":{"date-parts":[["2010"]]}},"prefix":"An early study by the author",",suffix":"found that unfinished and broken sentences reduced the ability of an interpreter to adequately interpret a sermon."}],"schema":"https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN

(1863-1945)

> For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith: as it is written, "But the righteous shall live by faith."
>
> *Romans 1:16-17*

When Paul wrote this letter he had never visited Rome. He earnestly desired to do so, and expected that his desire would be fulfilled. That desire was created by the fact of his Roman citizenship, and by his interest in the Christian Church in Rome; and that more especially because he desired that the Church in that city should be an instrument for the evangelization of the Western world. Writing thus to the saints in the Imperial City, he declared that he was not ashamed of the gospel, and he gave his reasons.

The statement that he was not ashamed is in itself interesting. It is the only occasion on which we find Paul even suggesting the possibility of being ashamed of the gospel. I am perfectly well aware that this is a declaration that he was not ashamed, but why make the declaration? I think there can be but one answer, and it is suggested by the words immediately preceding the text: "So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome." The declaration that he was not ashamed of the gospel, with its implication of the possibility of being ashamed, was the result of his consciousness of Rome, of its imperial dignity, of its material magnificence, of its proud contempt for all aliens, of the vastness of its multitudes, of the profundity of its corruption. There was no question in his mind as to the power of his gospel, and yet we detect the undertone of inquiry as he wrote: "I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel."

It is always easier to preach in a village than in a city, to the sweet, simple people of the countryside than to the satisfied metropolitans. Really it is not so, but the feeling that it is so invariably assails the soul of the prophet of God. In answer to that consciousness of his soul, or perhaps in answer to his feeling that such a consciousness might exist in the minds of the Roman Christians, Paul affirmed his readiness to preach the gospel in Rome also, declaring that he was not ashamed of it, and giving as his reason that this gospel was "the power of God unto salvation." The only justification of a

gospel is that it is powerful. A message that proclaims the need for, and the possibility of, spiritual and moral renewal must be tested by the results it produces. A word devoid of power is no word of the Lord. A gospel that fails to produce the results it announces as necessary and as possible is no gospel. Is our gospel the power of God?

Let me say at once that the particular burden of my message this evening has come to me as the result of a long letter which I now hold in my hand, four closely written pages which I am not going to read to you in full, but which I have read again and again for my own soul's profit and examination as a preacher of the gospel, and from which I propose to read a few sentences. The letter refers to meetings which have been held in preparation for the winter's work:

You were saying on Tuesday evening that men were everywhere inquiring after reality, and I quite agree. We often hear about the dynamic of Christianity. There are youths and young men—I speak only of those about whose temptations I know something—who have to face temptations, and even this week have cried to the Lord Jesus for help and have tried the best they knew how to overcome, yet have failed. When a young man comes to me and asks where he can get the power to overcome, what am I to say? One did remark to me, "It is not a lack in our religion that it supplies no real power to overcome such-and-such temptations, temptations that cannot be avoided, and that have to be faced?" Men don't want a merely theoretic idea or ideas about the dynamic of Christianity. They want to realize how they can practically appropriate that dynamic. Careful Christian workers want to know how far, and in what way, they may safely encourage those spiritually sick and blind to hope for spiritual help after they have believed for the forgiveness of their sins; and experience shows it must not be a matter of mere inference, for inference would be likely to promise more than what seems to be genuinely realized. To hold out hopes that experience must disappoint is disastrous. Yes, it is reality men are longing for.

I believe that letter expresses the inquiry and the feeling of many souls. I think that my friend has fastened on a word that he knows I am peculiarly fond of, the word dynamic. I plead guilty; I love the word, and I use it a great deal, and I do so because it is a New Testament word. It is the very word of my text, The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The letter of my friend is practically a challenge of the declaration of my text. The text says, "The gospel is the power, *dunamus*, of God into salvation." My friend suggests that there are men who have heard the call of Jesus, who have been obedient to it, and yet have not experienced that power. I am not going to argue the points of the letter, but rather to consider the statement of Paul, hoping and believing that in that consideration and in an attempt to understand the meaning of the great Apostle at this point there may be help for honest souls whose difficulty is voiced by the writer of the letter.

However, let me say to the writer of the letter, and to all such, that I agree that there is nothing more important today than that the Christian

preacher and teacher should be real in the use of terms. But all who are making that demand must recognize the extreme difficulty of reality in terminology when dealing with spiritual forces that can never be perfectly apprehended. Whenever we have to deal with great forces we find ourselves in a similar difficulty. I am not an electrician, but I suggest a question whether the phrase, "to develop electricity," is an accurate phrase. I do not say that it is not, but I ask, Can you develop electricity? Is it not, after all, a word that we hazard until we come to fuller knowledge? Is there any man in this house, or in London, or in the world, who is prepared to tell us the last thing about electricity, not only what can be done by it, but also what it is? The moment we get into the realm of great forces which are intangible, imponderable, demonstrated by what they do, we are at least in danger of seeming to be unreal in our terms. We are dealing now with the most wonderful of all forces. At the close of our meditation undoubtedly there will be a sense in which some of the terms used will seem to lack reality. It is not that the force dealt with is unreal, but that it is so far beyond our final explanation that terms cannot be discovered which cover the facts of the case while excluding everything that should be excluded.

Confining ourselves now to the words selected, let us consider, first, the affirmation, "The gospel... is the power of God unto salvation"; second, the condition on which the power is appropriated, "to every one that believeth"; and, finally, the exposition of the operation which the Apostle added, "for therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith."

THE AFFIRMATION

First, then, as to the affirmation. Here many sentences are not necessary. The Apostle declares that "the gospel... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The power: that is something which produces results, something which is more than a theory, something which is mightier than a law, an actual, spiritual force, producing spiritual results, an actual power accomplishing things. What it is in itself may be a mystery; how it does its work may not be known; but the Apostle declares that it accomplishes certain things, and that we may know by the results it produces that the gospel is more than a theory, more than a law, that it is, in fact, a power. Moreover, he makes the superlative declaration that it is "the power of God." This is the superlative way of declaring its sufficiency for doing certain things. In quality it is irresistible, in quantity it is inexhaustible. Yet he declares further that it is "the power of God unto salvation." This at once defines and limits the power of the gospel. The gospel is the power that operates to this end alone. The gospel is the power which operates to this end perfectly.

The word "salvation" immediately suggests inquiring what the danger is that is referred to, for to know the danger is to know the scope of the salvation. Here, to summarize briefly, the danger is twofold: pollution of the nature, and paralysis of the will. In the presence of temptation men find

that their nature is so weakened that they yield, and their will is so paralyzed that even when they have willed not to yield, still they do yield. That is the whole story of the danger. The Apostle declares that the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation," that is, for cleansing the nature from its pollution, and for enabling the will, so that henceforth a man shall not only will to do right, but shall do it.

It is perfectly clear, however, that the gospel operates in human lives only on the fulfillment of conditions. The gospel is not the power of God to every man. "The gospel... is the power of God to every one that believeth." The Apostle here recognized the human possibility, that is, a possibility common to all human nature, irrespective of race or privilege. "To the Jew first; and also to the Greek"; and to the Greek nonetheless and none the later. The conditions can be fulfilled by men as men, apart from the question of race or privilege or temperament. The gospel can be believed by the metropolitan or the provincial, by the dweller in Rome as surely as by the dwellers in the hamlets through which he had passed, by the learned and by the illiterate. Belief is the capacity and possibility of human life everywhere.

What, then, is this capacity? We must interpret the use of the word believe here by its constant use in the revelation of the New Testament. There must be conviction before there can be belief. Belief is always founded on reason. How can they believe who have not heard? The conviction is not necessarily that of the truth of the claim; it is not necessarily conviction that the gospel will work. There can be faith before I am sure that this gospel is going to work. Indeed, thousands of people have a profound conviction that the gospel will work who yet have never believed. The conviction necessary is that in view of the need experienced, and of the claim which the gospel makes, it ought to be put to the test. Jesus said to His critics on one occasion: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God." Surely that was a perfectly fair test. He who puts the gospel to the test of obeying it will find out whether its claim of power be accurate. When a man is convinced that in the presence of his need and of the claim which the gospel makes he ought to put it to the test, he has come to the true attitude of mind in which it is possible for him to exercise faith. Faith, then, is volitional. That is the central responsibility of the soul. Faith is not a feeling that comes stealing across the soul. Faith is not an inclination toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is that volitional act which decides in the presence of the great need, and in the presence of the great claim, to put that claim to the test by obedience thereto. Conduct is the resulting expression, which is conformity to the claims made by the gospel, immediate and progressive. Whatever the proclamation of the gospel says to the soul, the soul is to put the gospel to the test by obeying. Invariably in the actual coming of a soul to Christ under conviction of sin everything is focused at some one point; and when that is obeyed other calls will be made on the soul by this gospel, which is one of purity and righteousness, as well as of mercy and of love. Faith is that volitional act which puts the gospel to the test by obedience to its claims.

That is the condition of appropriation.

The whole situation is illuminated for the inquiring soul by the explanatory word: "For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith." That is the exposition of what the Apostle has already written concerning the gospel, both as to the nature of the power that is resident in it and as to the law by which that power is appropriated in individual lives. The declaration that there is a revelation in the gospel of the righteousness of God does not mean that the gospel has revealed the fact that God is righteous. That revelation antedated the gospel; it was found in the law, it was found in human history, it was found everywhere in the human heart. Out of that knowledge comes the agony of soul that seeks after a gospel. The declaration clearly means that the gospel reveals the fact that God places righteousness at the disposal of men who in themselves are unrighteous, that He makes it possible for the unrighteous man to become a righteous man. That is the exposition of salvation. Salvation is righteousness made possible. If you tell me that salvation is deliverance from hell, I tell you that you have an utterly inadequate understanding of what salvation is. If you tell me that salvation is forgiveness of sins, I shall affirm that you have a very partial understanding of what salvation is. Unless there be more in salvation than deliverance from penalty and forgiveness of transgressions, then I solemnly say that salvation cannot satisfy my own heart and conscience. That is the meaning of the letter I received: mere forgiveness of sins and deliverance from some penalty cannot satisfy the profoundest in human consciousness. Deep down in the common human consciousness there is a wonderful response to that which is of God. Man may not obey it, but in the deeps of human consciousness there is a response to righteousness, an admission of its call, its beauty, its necessity. Salvation, then, is making possible that righteousness. Salvation is the power to do right. However enfeebled the will may be, however polluted the nature, the gospel comes bringing to men the message of power enabling them to do right. In the gospel is revealed a righteousness of God, which, as the Apostle argues and makes quite plain as he goes on with his great letter, is a righteousness which is placed at the disposal of the unrighteous man so that the unrighteous man may become righteous in heart and thought and will and deed. Unless that be the gospel, there is no gospel. Paul affirms that was the gospel which he was going to Rome to preach.

Then we come to a phrase which is full of light. He tells us that this righteousness therein revealed, revealed in the gospel, is "by faith unto faith," in which phrase he tells us exactly how men receive this power. He has already told us that it is to everyone that believeth, then he gives us an exposition of that phrase. As he has given us an exposition of "salvation" as the revelation of righteousness of God at the disposal of men, so now he gives us an exposition of the phrase "every one that believeth" in the phrase "by faith unto faith."

The phrase is at once simple and difficult. There can be no question as to its structure. Taking the phrase as it stands, and looking at it

grammatically apart from its context, it is evident that the second "faith" is resultant faith. The faith finally referred to grows out of the faith first referred to. "By faith unto faith." It is an almost surprising thing how successfully almost all expositors have hurriedly passed over this phrase. What did the Apostle mean? Did he mean that is an initial faith on the part of man which results in a yet firmer faith? That is possible, but there is another explanation. I believe the Apostle meant that the gospel reveals a righteousness which is at the disposal of sinning men by the faith of God unto the faith of man. The faith of God produces faith in man. The faith of God. Ought such a phrase be used of Him? Verily, if faith be certainty, confidence, and activity based on confidence.

The faith of God is faith in Himself, in His Son, and in man. On the basis of God's faith in Himself, and on the basis of His faith in His Son, and on the basis of His faith in man, He places through His Son a righteousness at the disposal of man in spite of his sin. That faith of God becomes, when once it is apprehended, the inspiration of an answering faith in man. Inspired by God's faith I trust Him. I act in consonance with the faith that He has demonstrated in human history by sending His Son, and by all the provision of infinite grace.

I take my way back from this epistle and observe once more the Lord Jesus as He revealed God to me, and that is what He always did in dealing with sinning souls. He always reposed confidence in them in order to inspire their confidence in Himself. If Thou canst do anything, said one man to Him; If thou canst...! All things are possible to him that believeth, was His answer. That was the Lord's declaration of His confidence in the possibility of the man who was face to face with the sense of his own appalling weakness. There are many yet more remarkable and outstanding illustrations in the New Testament. The Lord ever dealt with men on the basis of His confidence in them, in their possibility in spite of failure, always on condition that they would repose an answering confidence in Himself. A supreme illustration of this was afforded in the upper room on that last night when He was dealing with the disciples in the sight of His approaching departure. Mark most carefully His conversation with Peter. Peter, demanding to understand Him, in agony in the presence of the gathering clouds, said: Where art Thou going? Jesus replied: Whither I go ye cannot come now, but ye shall come hereafter. Again Peter asked: Why cannot I come now? I will follow Thee anywhere. I will die for Thee! Jesus replied: Wilt Thou die for me, Peter? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied Me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. If I go away, I come again to receive you to Myself. I go to prepare a place for you.

Take out of that conversation its central value. It is Christ's confidence. He said to Peter, in effect: I know the worst that is in you, the forces that you have not yet discovered that within four-and-twenty hours will make you a denier, cursing and swearing. I know the worst, but if you will trust Me I will realize the best in you. I know the best in you. I shall have

perfect confidence in you, provided you will have confidence in Me.

Let me take a superlative declaration. Whatever we think about humanity, Christ thought it worth dying for! He believed in it, in spite of its sin, in spite of its unutterable failure. When He confronted sinning souls He believed in them. He knew their incapacity. He knew that of themselves they could do nothing; but He knew also that in them was the very stuff out of which He could make saints who would flash and shine in light forever. In spite of the spoiling of sin, there was that in them with which He could deal. If I may borrow an awkward word from the old theologians, God believes in the salvability of all men. God puts righteousness at the disposal of man by faith in Himself, in His Son, and in the man at whose disposal He places it. If that once be seen, men respond to that faith of God by faith in Him.

Let us come away from the realm of argument into the realm of experience. All true Christian workers, men and women who know what it is really to get into close touch with sinning souls, and into grip with the spiritual life of men, have learned that the way to lift men back out of the slough of despond is to let them see that Christian workers believe in them. The way to lift any woman back again out of the degradation into which she has come is to show her you know she is capable of the higher and the nobler in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "By faith unto faith." By faith a righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. By the confidence which God reposes in Himself, and by the confidence He has in the possibility of every human life, He has placed righteousness at man's disposal through Christ. No man will ever avail himself of that except by faith. No man can appropriate the great provision save as he responds in faith to faith. As this faith of God in man is answered by the faith of man in God, then contact is made between the dynamic that is resident within Himself, and placed at the disposal of men by the mystery of His passion, and the weakness and incapacity of the human soul.

Such was the gospel of which Paul was not ashamed. Such is the gospel. The accuracy of the theory can be demonstrated only by results. That is the whole theme. I am here this evening to affirm once more—and I do it no longer as theory, I do it as an experience; I speak from this moment not merely as advocate, but as witness—that "the gospel... is the power of God unto salvation." However hard and severe the affirmation may seem at the moment, I am nevertheless constrained and compelled to affirm that if the gospel does not work, the failure is in the man, not in the gospel. If that be not true the whole Christian history is a lie. If that be true, then all the thousands and tens of thousands of human beings who for two millenniums have declared what the gospel has wrought in them have been woefully deceived, or have been most mysteriously perpetrating fraud throughout the centuries and millenniums. If it does not work, then that man who says that he has been delivered from besetting sin is a liar, and he is sinning in secret. Either this declaration is true, or the gospel is an awful deception, enabling men to hide secret sin. I pray you think again. If you have imagined that there is no

dynamic in the gospel, think again, and examine your own life again, and find out whether or not you have fallen into line with the claims of the gospel and fulfilled its conditions. I assert that it is not enough that man shall hate his sin and cry out for help; he must put himself in line with the power that operates, he must fulfill the conditions laid down. It is not enough to submit to the Lord; a man must also resist the devil. It is not enough to resist the devil; a man must also submit to the Lord. There are men who submit and cry for help, but they put up no fight against temptations. They will never appropriate the power. There are men who put up a strenuous fight against temptations, but they never submit, never pray, never seek help. They will never find deliverance. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The gospel is that wherein the fact is revealed that righteousness as a power is at the disposal of a sinning man by God's faith in that man, inspiring man's faith in God. If men would discover the power of this gospel they will do so as they submit to its claim immediately and thoroughly.

If this were the time and place, as it is not, I could call witnesses. They are in this house: men who have known the very temptations delicately referred to in this letter, subtle, insidious temptations; but who also know that the gospel has meant to them power enabling them to do the things they fain would have done, but could not until they believed in this gospel.

CONCLUSION

I would like my last note in this address to be an appeal to any man who is face to face with this problem. My brother, God believes in you, and that in spite of all the worst there is in you. God knows the worst in you better than you know it yourself, yet He believes in you; and because He believes in your possibility He has provided righteousness in and through the Son of His love and by the mystery of His passion. I want you to respond to God's faith in you by putting your faith in Him, and demonstrating your faith by beginning with the next thing in obedience. You also will find that the gospel is the power of God, not theory, not inference, but a power that, coming into the life, realizes within the life and experience all the things of holiness and of righteousness and of high and eternal beauty.

BOOK REVIEWS

Reading for Preaching: The Preacher in Conversation with Storytellers, Biographers, Poets, and Journalists. By Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. 978-0802870773. 133 pp., $14.00.

Reviewer: *Jeffrey Arthurs, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA.*

This slim volume, like the book of Proverbs, packs a lot of wisdom—insight for skillful living in the fear of God—into a few pages. The subject matter of *Reading for Preaching* is fresh and focused: how preachers can benefit from reading narrative fiction, narrative non-fiction, and poetry. The value of such reading is not simply filling an illustration file, or even fine-tuning the ear for an evocative and clear style, although Plantinga devotes chapters to each of those values. The deeper benefit is wisdom. Great artists such as Emily Dickinson and even hard-shelled Ernest Hemingway, help us understand and feel the drama and irony of life. Plantinga is not blind, of course, to the pernicious folly that some geniuses pen, but reading even those authors helps preachers understand the human heart.

Having taught seminars on this material multiple times at Calvin Seminary and in other venues, the author speaks with confidence and verve, yet also with humility. He stands shoulder to shoulder with pastors and homileticians exhorting us, not browbeating us, to read. "Just one novel a year? And one biography? And one-fifth of a book of poetry by one poet? And a weekly visit to the website Arts & Letters Daily to find out what the best journalists have been saying? Not a bad plan, I think" (42).

Plantinga's own prose delights the reader as much as the dozens of passages he quotes from luminaries like Tolstoy and Steinbeck. In lamenting sermons that lack clarity: "Lostness is a great topic for a sermon, but not a great condition for its audience" (46). In promoting economy of diction: "Empty calories in a sermon don't feed the flock" (54). In describing how congregations are always mixed, some people preferring ecstatic worship and some sedate: "Some love ardor and some love order" (66).

For preachers like myself who reveled in their liberal arts education and who find reading fiction, biography, and poetry a labor of love, Plantinga preaches to the choir. To the rest of you we say: join the chorus.

Without Apology: Sermons for Christ's Church. By Stanley Hauerwas. New York: Seabury, 2013. 978-159627248-4. 169 pp., $15.23.

Reviewer: *Brian S. Dubberly, Jr., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.*

Stanley Hauerwas is the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor Emeritus of Divinity and Law at Duke Divinity School. His academic contributions cross the lines between systematic and philosophical theology, ethics, and political theory, often emphasizing the importance of the church in his writing and lectures. This emphasis is demonstrated in his latest book, *Without Apology*, which is primarily a collection of sermons for the church. *Without Apology* is Hauerwas's fifth publication of sermons.

The book has five parts. Part one contains four sermons Hauerwas preached at his home church, Church of the Holy Family in Chapel Hill. These sermons tend to have more of a personal feel than the others. Part two contains five sermons Hauerwas delivered at Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville, where he serves as canon theologian. These sermons are more philosophical. Part three contains five sermons preached on special occasions at a variety of locations. This section contains sermons delivered to Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopalian churches across America. Part four is composed of sermons regarding the significance of the work of the ministry. These sermons were given at various seminary commencements and ordination services. Part five contains brief essays on leadership, Christians beginning college, and the connection between loneliness and adultery in the ministry.

The sermons are brief and stand well on their own. Readers will find very little commentary from Hauerwas about his sermons. He writes that, "If you need to explain what you were trying to do, then the sermon needs to be rewritten" (xxvii). There is, however, an insightful "Introduction" wherein he offers a few well informed, albeit impromptu-sounding responses to questions like, "What is preaching?" and "What is preaching supposed to accomplish?"

Hauerwas approaches, though never arrives at, a definition of preaching. He says that preaching is: "the gift God has given the church so that our lives can be located within God's life by having our existence storied by the Gospel" (xvii); "the ongoing exercise that allows the Gospel to shed light on the oddness of the everyday" (xviii); "the exercise and exemplification of a truthful political authority that the world desperately needs" (xx). He explains further that "the task of preaching is to show that the way things are is not the way things have to be" (xxi). These less-than-concrete comments about preaching do not detract from the book's value. Homileticians will appreciate the opportunity to interact with Hauerwas's musings regarding a theory of preaching.

Hauerwas admits a strong identification with Karl Barth (xv). This is especially evident in his "avoidance of sentimental appeals to common experience" (xxiv). Many will be familiar with Barth's rejection of the Catholic conception of *analogia entis* and its ramifications for preaching. Barth denied the utility of sermon introductions. Similarly, Hauerwas maintains that

anecdotal sermon illustrations make the mistake of presuming that human experience illumines the Gospel, when in fact the Gospel must illumine human experience (xxiv).

It is likely that both conservative and liberal preachers will balk at Hauerwas's refusal to perform much explanation of the text in his sermons. The former might complain that he neglects historical-grammatical exegesis. The latter may assume that he has not given sufficient weight to the impact of historical criticism upon the text's meaning. Hauerwas admits the value of both interpretive endeavors, though not for use in the pulpit. He insists that the Bible does not need "to be rescued from that utopian place called the 'original setting'" (xxii). Instead of the preacher and the church explaining the text, the text must narrate and explain the lives of the preacher and the church.

The primary value of Hauerwas's collection of sermons is found in the warm, passionate, and faith-filled way he leads God's people to do theology in response to the Scriptures. His is a keen, highly trained mind, but there is an unmistakable humility and joy that fills each of these sermons. Ministers will no doubt be helped to preach doctrine more compassionately and enthusiastically if they learn from the pattern of preaching Hauerwas sets forth in this volume.

Shaped by the Story: Discover the Art of Bible Storying. By Michael Novelli. Minneapolis: Sparkhouse, 2013. 978-1-4514-6942-4. 207 pp., $19.99.

Reviewer: *Reg Grant, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.*

Michael Novelli provides a textbook for storytelling that includes a healthy dose of apologetic for the form (Parts One and Two, comprising nine chapters) a helpful "how to" section (Part Three, consisting of three chapters), and practical workbook-like appendices (includes helpful URLs with lots of links/downloadable content). Novelli has many years of experience under his belt, and has honed his skills to a fine edge in this practical guide to what he calls Bible Storying.

Part One: My Bible Storying Journey provides an experiential apologetic for this particular approach to communicating biblical narrative. Novelli recounts his frustration and subsequent rejection of what he terms expository/propositional preaching (chapters 1, 2). His training in homiletics did not allow the narrative to function as narrative. He was taught a method that stressed the authority of Scripture, but was reductionistic, academic, antiseptic, intellectual, and cold. The kids in his youth group remained uninterested and unchanged by the great story of the Bible.

Out of frustration, Novelli turned to the proven method of storytelling as exemplified in the chronological Bible storying approach of

John Witte, a missionary to Africa. This approach appealed to Novelli because it allowed the genre of narrative to function as it was intended to function – as story. The process of Bible storying encouraged audience participation in the biblical story by telling the story in such a dynamic and simple way that the listeners relived the story vicariously, and so became involved in ways they had never experienced before. The Bible came to life for those students for the first time through an effective retelling of the story.

Part Two: Why Bible Storying Connects provides additional experiential arguments for storying, as well as a particularly helpful section on contemporary learning theory, and a biblical apologetic for the legitimacy of Bible storying. He effectively adapts David Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, integrating his own six-step process with Kolb's accommodation to different learning styles (113, 142–153).

Part Three: How to Lead Bible Storying contains a wealth of practical guidelines, based on the extensive storytelling experience of Novelli and other respected practitioners. Details include average word count per story (600–800, or about 7 to 8 minutes speaking for elementary and adult students), optimum length of class (60–90 minutes), the importance of telling the story twice back to back (one man, one woman), and even some helpful rules of thumb (e.g., don't mention more than five names of people or places—it gets to information-heavy; 134).

While *Shaped by the Story* is a helpful and well-written workbook for biblical storytelling, there is a significant caveat. Novelli's understanding of the inspiration of Scripture fails on two counts: 1) he reduces inspiration to a dictation theory of transmission (55) and claims that the biblical *authors* were inspired (rather than the *words*, à la 2 Tim 3:16). "Not every detail [of the historical accounts] was translated … exactly as it happened, but the essence is intact." "Ancient Near Eastern cultures didn't think like us—like left-brained scientists, focusing on empirical thought, and evidence and accuracy. They thought in a more fluid, poetic, and big-picture way. It was far messier. They didn't worry about contradictions in fact, they welcomed them" (56). In rejecting the dictation theory of inspiration he opens the door to an uncomfortably subjective hermeneutic that stresses personal interpretations that are subject to correction of the majority of students who happen to agree on their own subjective analysis of the story. The teacher takes a real back seat here.

Instead of holding fast to the inerrant word of God as the center of his hermeneutical cosmos, he maintains an audience-centered emphasis: "… moving from teacher/lecture-based to learner-based methods is imperative," (116); "[s]torying is designed as learner-centered teaching" (116). These are dangerous waters because they lure the expositor onto the rocks of subjective analysis (encouraging the students to *make* meaning, 103) with the promise that every spark of light one sees through the fog of interpretation is a lighthouse. The inerrant word of God is the biblical storyteller's only true light, but he must, as Novelli insists, deliver the biblical message in a way

that appropriately reflects the genre in which it was originally composed. Then the biblical storyteller will be true to the text *and* true to its form.

Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World—and our Preaching—is Changing. By David J. Lose. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. 978-0800699734. 124 pp., $19.00.

Reviewer: *Abraham Kuruvilla, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.*

David J. Lose is President of Luther Seminary at Philadelphia where he also teaches preaching. He has thought long and hard about postmodernism and homiletics. And you can tell from the books he has written: they are thoughtful, reflective, and farsighted. This one is no exception.

As the title suggests, Lose thinks (and I agree) that preaching is at a crossroads, especially in this "post-Christian" world (5). He puts his finger on the pulse of the change that has happened in the last five decades: postmodernism (How do we know for sure anything is true?), secularism (Who said truth is rooted in God?), and pluralism (What's so distinctive about Christianity?). Having admitted the patient (preaching) for observation, Lose, like a good physician proceeds to diagnose the three ailments in turn and treat the invalid. So the book comes with a chapter for the diagnosis and a chapter for the therapeutics for each of three afflictions—six chapters in all.

As far as postmodernism is concerned, it rejects absolute objectivity or a "God's-eye-view" of things. Everything depends on your point of view; skepticism is the order of the day. So Lose declares: "Our task as Christian theologians and preachers is not to *prove* the faith claims we make (ever the modernist penchant) but instead to witness to the truth we perceive" (21). Amen! The best apologetic: "Taste and see what I've tasted and seen!"

So far so good. Now how do we treat the condition? Lose wants us to tell "the sacred story as vividly and clearly as possible in order to render the Christian narrative as a three-dimensional worldview that seems a viable alternative to our people in light of the other stories" (24). This is where I started to get lost: What "story" or "world view" (or metanarrative) is this? The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? The story of Jesus and the disciples? All of the above? This didn't help: "If the Christian faith is, among other things, a grand narrative or worldview that attempts to make sense of all of our lives, then theological doctrines are the signposts and markers along the narrative route" (27). Where do "theological doctrines" fit into the "narrative"? In other places, Lose seems to agree with "the Reformers' insistence … that Christians invariably read the whole of Scripture in light of the confession that the crucified Jesus of Nazareth is also the resurrected Christ" (38–39). So is it a christocentric "story" that Lose is referring to? In short, Lose makes a good diagnosis—postmodernism. But I am not clear about the prescription.

The second disease he isolates is secularism, a loss of confidence in the transcendent science had something to do with it. As the body of scientific knowledge grew, the place for God seemingly shrank, since we can now explain lots of things—from hurricanes to heart failure, from silicon chips to synapses—all without recourse to God. God and faith have now been "relegated to the private and personal dimensions of our life" (53).

And the treatment for secularism? Since the problem is a loss of hope for the present and for the future (66), Lose wants preachers to cultivate hope in congregants by focusing on their vocations, to give them a sense of the transcendent in the mundane tasks of the world. Lose suggests visiting people in their vocational arenas, describing those visits in sermons, preaching about the ordinary lives of ordinary people (in illustrations and such); having folks give testimonies of God working in ordinary lives (73–77). I see the connection, but I'm not convinced that is the answer to secularism. Again, nice diagnosis. But I am not sure the pill works.

Third diagnosis: pluralism. "The proliferation of different and competing stories about reality, that is, has occupied more and more of our congregants' attention, crowding out the biblical story [what?] as *the* narrative by which to make sense of all others and rendering it just one among a multitude."

According to Lose, church folk are "[b]ereft of this primary narrative to supply a religious identity" (101). So, he asserts, the treatment is preaching based on Web 2.0, interaction: "participatory preaching" (105)—"a homiletic that invites, nurtures, and expects a lively interaction between hearer and text" (106). And here are his suggestions (107–110): visit people in the venues of their vocations; invite congregations to look for biblical message they heard interpreted, in their daily lives; invite participation in sermon, both nonverbally and verbally; etc. Again we have an interesting diagnosis, but the medicine does not seem tailored for the disease.

Moreover, the three diagnoses do not seem to be discrete diseases but symptoms of the same disease. And to me, the disease seems to be not as much an affliction of the world and people, as a problem with us preachers ourselves—our anemic understanding of what the biblical "story" is. I wish Lose would have told us what that was.

Old Testament Today: A Journey from Ancient Context to Contemporary Relevance. Second edition. By John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. 978-0310498209. 452 pp., $44.99.

Reviewer: R. *Larry Overstreet (retired), Corban University School of Ministry, Salem, OR.*

Walton and Hill are both professors at Wheaton College and

accomplished Old Testament scholars. They designed this book as an introductory college textbook for a one-semester course. They seek to accomplish four objectives: (1) to introduce the "content of the Old Testament," (2) "to provide an orientation to the world of the Old Testament," (3) to "provide an orientation to the study of the Old Testament," and (4) to "offer an orientation to the theology of the Old Testament" (xv).

The book is divided into six parts. Part 1 gives "Orientation Fundamentals," and serves as the book's general introduction. It explains what to expect in a study of the Old Testament, showing its overall "plotline" and its authority as Scripture. They illustrate their approach with a tapestry, which must be viewed in its completeness, rather than as individual threads. They also provide a summary of genre, cultural background, the focus of revelation, and a survey of how writing and books developed in ancient cultures.

Parts 2 through 5 form the heart of the book, each covering a section of the Old Testament (Pentateuch, narrative literature, prophetic literature, wisdom literature and Psalms). Each part opens with an orientation section that focuses on Yahweh, key verses, outline of the biblical section, key plotline terms, a time line, and a map of the area where the events occurred. After the orientation, each Part consists of four chapters, except for five chapters in Part 5, where they treat Wisdom Literature and Psalms separately. Each part begins with a new chapter number sequence. Locating a particular section in the book is facilitated by color coding on the edges of the pages of the volume. The particular chapters in each part provide an introduction to the section, the theology of the section, an introduction to each biblical book in the section (a welcome addition in this edition of the book), and the contemporary relevance and application of the section. Each part concludes with some reflections, a review of key terms, and a selected bibliography emphasizing a more advance level of study.

Part 6 is an Epilogue which considers additional questions often raised in Old Testament studies: how the Old Testament relates to the New, how interpreting one Testament connects with interpreting the other, whether or not Israelites were "saved," etc.

The final pages of the book provide an appendix that provides what they consider the 150 most significant Old Testament chapters. Perhaps this is for the reader who does not have the inclination to read the entire Old Testament. There is also a glossary and an index.

This book is clearly designed for the contemporary reader, and is user friendly. It contains a multitude of full color photos and diagrams, has numerous sidebars that discuss particular topics in more detail, has a conversational tone, and frequently stresses the reader's faith relationship with God.

The book's strength, however, may also be a weakness. It seeks to convey the meaning and significance of the entire Old Testament in one 450-page volume. This is a daunting task. It requires that subjects often have

only a cursory discussion, when a seasoned reader may wish for more depth. It opens the door to discussions (such as creation, and whether or not the Garden of Eden is "sacred space"), but does not fully provide those discussions. Readers may occasionally find themselves disagreeing with particular interpretations or approaches. In a study covering the content of the entire Old Testament, this is not surprising. Still, the volume is of great value and is of significant benefit for grasping the flow of Scripture.

Readers of *JEHS* will particularly appreciate the closing chapter of each part, wherein the authors provide specific direction toward "relevance and application." Preachers of the Old Testament frequently struggle with the issue of how to apply texts correctly, with hermeneutical integrity. Walton and Hill demonstrate a clear methodology that will benefit those who desire to communicate effectively the Old Testament to today's listeners.

A few editing issues aside, this is a welcome volume in Old Testament studies. It will prove valuable to college students, other readers desiring to grasp the thought of the Old Testament, and preachers desiring to proclaim and apply its truth.

Obadiah: The Kingship Belongs to YHWH. By Daniel Block. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 978-0310942405. 128 pp., $19.99.
Jonah: God's Scandalous Mercy. By Kevin J. Youngblood. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. 978-0310282990. 192 pp., $29.99.

Reviewer: *Randal E. Pelton, Calvary Bible Church, Mount Joy, PA.*

The bottom line? Yes, the new series orchestrated by Daniel Block (series title: Hearing the Message of Scripture: A Commentary on the Old Testament) is a useful tool for preaching pastors. Here are some key reasons why.

Expository preachers will say, "Amen," to the series' goal. Its authors recognize the need for key sermon points to correspond to the message the biblical authors were communicating. That implies paying "close attention to the rhetorical agendas of biblical authors" (9). Both commentaries reviewed here provided detailed descriptions of the flow or logical argument of their respective books. It was refreshing to see detailed exegesis serving the larger purpose of revealing a biblical author's rhetorical strategy ("what strategies they used to impress their message on their hearers' ears," 9). Both writers maintained this focus throughout their commentaries. I benefited from seeing this flow of thought for the entire books of Obadiah and Jonah and also for individual, smaller thought-blocks.

The six-fold format is effective in achieving the series' goals. Especially welcomed are section 1 (The Main Idea of the Passage)—I found each main idea to be an accurate reflection of the particular section of

Scripture; section 3 (Translation and Exegetical Outline)—despite having access to many major English translations of the Bible, I benefited from the authors' attempts to clarify meaning with their own translation (a good example in Obadiah 3 is the choice of "smugness" for the Hebrew, pride; or Jonah 4:4, 9 [twice]: "Is your anger that intense?"; also helpful was the layout, enabling one to see the biblical text on the left column and an outline positioned on the right column to show how the outline points coincide with the verses in the thought-block); and section 6 (Canonical and Practical Significance—see comments below).

Block's statement of Obadiah's rhetorical aim helps frame our sermon(s): "… to rebuild his audience's hope in the eternal promises of God" (35). Precise analysis of such key terms as, the Day of the Lord, serve us well in helping to explain theology to the Church (82). Attention paid to intertexuality has the potential to add theological depth without overpowering the message of the Text in question (see, for instance, the chart displaying Obadiah's similarities with Jeremiah (39).

Expert treatment of Hebrew literary devices results in numerous "Ah!" (enjoying the way God communicated his prophesies) and "Aha!" (learning new insights) moments, a welcome aid for pastors who never learned Hebrew or have let their skills slip over the years. For instance, the fact that the same word, evil, is used to describe both Jonah and the Ninevites signifies that they share similar moral conditions, something, no doubt, inconceivable to Jonah. And how about the wonderful example of textual information gaps (42, 56, in *Jonah*): we don't know why Jonah rejects his mission until the very end (an unfamiliar technique to many of us, an ignorance that has resulted in some interesting sermons on Jonah 1!).

The Canonical and Practical Significance sections help us see how Obadiah and Jonah, for instance, mean something within the context of the entire Canon. Some readers will appreciate the hermeneutical implication made by combining canonical and practical in the same section.

I did pick some minor bones of contention. The Historical Background to Obadiah's Prophecies (22–27) contained much speculation that does not help us interpret or apply the book's theology. More speculation followed in the next section of the Introduction. I would love to have read less doubt and more doctrine-enhancing details. About a third of the Obadiah volume devoted to introductory matters seems to be a bit overkill for Obadiah. The Canonical and Practical Significance sections in Obadiah and Jonah were not consistently Christ-centered. I assume that the General Editor will continue to allow such variation throughout the series. So, depending on one's hermeneutic, readers will have to explore each individual commentary to see whether their expectations and needs will be met. Even Block's Christ-centered statement stopped short of combining the christological with the ethical for Obadiah: "In Christ not only the prophecy of Obadiah, but all of God's promises to Israel are fulfilled" (116). True. But, in Christ Christians become holy (1:17, "… there shall be holiness"). All of us Esaus become

Jacobs as a result of our Lord's humiliation and exaltation (1:3–4).

Some slides into spiritualizing seemed out of place in material devoted to maintaining integrity in interpretation for preaching: "Jonah, however, must pay for his own transportation…in his rebellious flight. Disobedience is costly …." Agreed. But, as pastors realize, it's not easy to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate principlizing.

All that being said, I will certainly consider volumes in the Hearing the Message of Scripture series on the Old Testament as additions to my library and commend Daniel Block and Zondervan for making them available to preachers.

Preaching: A Biblical Theology. By Jason C. Meyer. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 978-1433519710. 368 pp., $22.99.

Reviewer: *Gary L. Shultz Jr., First Baptist Church, Fulton, MO.*

Jason Meyer's goal in writing *Preaching* is to answer the question, what is preaching? While many books currently flooding the market offer answers to this question, Meyer's book stands out for three reasons. First, Meyer provides a detailed survey of what the entire Bible says about the ministry of the word and preaching, giving us his definition of preaching at the beginning of the book and then exhaustively demonstrating how Scripture led him to his definition. Second, Meyer carefully distinguishes between preaching in Scripture and today's preaching from Scripture, showing us how these two types of preaching relate and how they are different. Third, Meyer explicitly bases all of his instruction of what expository preaching is and how it should be done on the biblical theology of preaching that he develops.

Meyer follows Peter Adam's *Speaking God's Words* in treating preaching as a ministry of the word, though his focus is on preaching and everything he says about the ministry of the word he applies to preaching. He defines the ministry of the word as "stewarding and heralding God's word in such a way that people encounter God through his word" (21). Stewarding God's Word focuses on the content of preaching, which is the stewarded word of God, the words with which God has entrusted his servants. Heralding God's Word emphasizes the tone of delivery, or how the stewarded word should be preaching. Stewarding and heralding are closely related because the herald's authoritative tone is only legitimate as he faithfully stewards the word given to him. Leading people to encounter God through his word stresses the fact that preaching leads to a moment of decision for its hearers. Once the preacher has stewarded God's word by heralding it, the listeners are now called to steward God's word. When they do this they encounter life and blessing from God, when they do not, they encounter death and curse.

Preaching contains five parts, and after reading the first part the latter three can profitably be read in any order (I read Part One first, then Part Five, Part Three, Part Four, and finally Part Two). Part One offers a big picture biblical theology of the ministry of the word, including definitions of what preaching is and how it should be done, as well as broad overviews of the Bible's structure, its storyline, and the role God's word plays in the drama of Scripture. The last chapter in Part One outlines ten paradigms of how God's word is stewarded throughout the entire Bible, from the covenant of creation to the stewardship of the word today by pastors in local churches. Part Two then offers a detailed look at each one of these paradigms of stewardship, with helpful application for today's preachers in each chapter. Part Three applies the findings of the first two parts to expository preaching today, explaining what it is, how it should be done, and why it should be done. Part Four examines the relationship between the doctrines of Scripture and sin and preaching and explores the validity and place of topical preaching. Part Five is the conclusion, offering some big-picture applications to the preacher.

Meyer has written a book on the theology of preaching that should be a standard for years to come. The works of Graeme Goldsworthy and Edmund Clowney on preaching and biblical theology offer some similar findings, but neither one is as comprehensive or detailed as *Preaching*. Meyer is careful to continually draw applications from the theology he writes, and the book keeps the local church pastor in mind from start to finish. While his biblical survey of the ministry of the word is comprehensive, Meyer never gets too technical for the average pastor or bogged down in details that distract from his purpose. He consistently keeps the big picture in mind and incorporates everything into the purpose of his book, which is to help busy pastors understand what the Bible says preaching is and what that means for preaching today. He is readable, relatable, and shares his own experiences when appropriate, always for the reader's benefit. I would recommend this book to any preacher, especially students and those who are beginning their ministries, as it provides a strong foundation and justification for what we are called to do in proclaiming God's word.

The Scriptures Testify About Me: Jesus and the Gospel in the Old Testament. Edited by D. A. Carson. Wheaton, IL: Crossway (2013). 978-1433538087. 187 pp., $16.99.

Reviewer: *Ben Walton, Arizona Christian University, Phoenix, AZ.*

This book of eight sermons from the Gospel Coalition's 2011 National Conference exemplifies many of the difficulties evangelicals face in their attempts to preach Christ from every text. Carson writes that apart from Al Mohler's sermon, the book's purpose is to provide "expositions"

that show how these preachers "bring the reader to Jesus and the gospel" from "a variety of highly diverse Old Testament texts" (9–10). It is unclear, however, what Carson means by exposition, because most of these sermons do not communicate or apply their texts' theology, although they do find ways to preach Christ.

The first sermon is by Mohler and focuses on John 5:31–47. Mohler gives the impression that so long as Christ is preached, the preacher is free to use the text as a starting point to rally the audience around his own ideas. For example, there is no textual justification for his decision, midway through, to discuss how preachers throughout history use or misuse the Old Testament. It might have been better if he had presented his message as a general exhortation, one that intersects with Scripture at points, instead of giving the impression that he is expounding a specific text.

The second is by Tim Keller on Exod 14. Keller's sermon is the least textually grounded, probably because he is consciously employing a "creative" hermeneutic. He gives the impression that it is acceptable to allegorize Old Testament narratives so long as it is an allegory of Christ.

The third and fourth sermons are by Alistair Begg on the book of Ruth and James MacDonald on Ps 25. Begg deserves credit for recognizing Ruth as a complete unit, literarily and theologically. Both he and MacDonald show the homiletical advantages of making connections to real life and avoiding cross-referencing. Nonetheless, both sermons struggled to communicate the text's coherence.

The fifth and seventh sermons are by Conrad Mbewe on Jer 23:1–8 and Mike Bullmore on the book of Zephaniah. Mbewe and Bullmore show that it is possible to simultaneously preach expository sermons competently and point listeners to Christ legitimately. While Mbewe's sermon lacks concrete application—as do all of the book's sermons—it displays the efforts of a careful preacher. His sermon focuses on a fairly text-specific big idea, has a thoughtful introduction, provides a mini-synopsis prior to reading each textual unit, and points to Christ toward the end of the sermon in a way that fits the text.

The sixth is by Matt Chandler on Eccles 11:9–12:8. Chandler shows that using longitudinal themes to preach Christ can bog down a sermon and leave little room to preach a text-specific message. He summarizes the basic meaning of the text early in the sermon, but then seems to run out of things to say. He fills the time by spending an extended period on each of nine cross-references. He concludes, not with text-specific application, but generic exhortations, one of which comes from Gal 5:16.

The eighth is by Carson on Psalm 110. Carson shows the perils of preaching that addresses the preacher's intellectual needs and not the needs of the audience. It is rarely a good sign when a preacher says, "I have spent an undue amount of time explaining …," especially in a conclusion (171). He might have served the audience better by omitting several of his five- to ten-minute justifications of technical points. Further, Carson's sermon is not

so much on Ps 110, but is instead a topical message that answers something like, "What does it mean that Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek?"

Overall, the book demonstrates that successful preaching—in the eyes of real-world listeners—is primarily about perceptions of *ethos* and *pathos*. The preachers in this book are all successful, like many of the seeker-focused preachers with whom they disagree. Nonetheless, few of these messages communicated the text's specific theological message, and none applied it concretely. Their preaching, in practice, appears similar in method—although not in content—to that of theological moderates and liberals with whom they find fault, in that Christ or the gospel are central to the sermon, not the communication and application of the text and its specific authoritative message. Perhaps we can enhance our *logos* without diminishing *ethos* and *pathos*, so that God may use us to move listeners to follow Christ through clear and text-specific proclamation and concrete application.

Exploring Prosperity Preaching: Biblical Health, Wealth, and Wisdom. By Debra J. Mumford. Valley Forge: Judson, 2012. 978-0817017088. 141 pp., $15.99.

Reviewer: *Russell St. John, Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO.*

Debra J. Mumford's *Exploring Prosperity Preaching* attempts to define and to evaluate "prosperity gospel," and while offering the reader some valuable insights during that attempt, Mumford nevertheless suffers from a paucity of familiarity with evangelical Christianity and a distinct lack of theological nuance.

Defining the prosperity gospel as "a Christian theology whose signature teaching is that God wants believers to be rich and to enjoy good physical health," Mumford assumes that prosperity teaching is a flawed but distinctly Christian theology that stands within the pale of historic Christianity (1). Whether by choice or ignorance, she fails entirely to interact with evangelicals, some of whom view prosperity teaching as another gospel altogether, which is by definition anti-Christian, and which stands outside the bounds of Christian orthodoxy. Mumford does not defend her definition of the prosperity gospel; she assumes it, and while she is free to disagree with evangelical critiques, the reader might expect her, at a minimum, to acknowledge the existence of alternate views.

Writing from the perspective of liberation theology, and employing its hermeneutical and theological assumptions, Mumford lacks familiarity with, and consistently fails to distinguish nuances within, evangelical Christianity, manifesting ignorance in reference to the entire realm of Christian belief and practice that stands to her right on the theological spectrum. She does not distinguish—and possibly is not able to distinguish—between evangelicals,

fundamentalists, and prosperity preachers. Equating an evangelical view of the inspiration of Scripture with mere puppetry, she asserts that prosperity preachers necessarily reach the wrong theological conclusions because they believe that the Bible is the word of God. Mumford suggests that prosperity preachers—and, by association, evangelicals—reject the practice of biblical exegesis, but she clearly conflates liberal biblical criticism with biblical exegesis. She has no place for redemptive-historical hermeneutical tools in her interpretive framework, fails to differentiate between a literal and literalistic reading of Scripture, equates biblical theology with allegorizing, and flatly denies that Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. Each of these errors is discussed in such a way that the reader is genuinely left to wonder whether Mumford is even aware that alternate ways of thinking exist.

Mumford is at her strongest when simply describing the teachings of prosperity preachers, or when offering the reader historical background. Her descriptions of the teachings of E. W. Kenyon, Kenneth Hagin, and Creflo Dollar, among others, help the reader understand the origins and principles of prosperity preaching. When, however, she turns to analysis or begins to comment upon these teachings, Mumford has little to offer to an evangelical reader.

If the reader approaches *Exploring Prosperity Preaching* with the simple desire to glean information about the history of and principle figures in the prosperity gospel movement, then this book may offer valuable nuggets to the discerning reader. If, however, one desires not merely background information, but also solid analysis, then the work leaves much to be desired.

Preaching Funerals in the Black Church: Bringing Perspective to Pain. By Peter M. Wherry. Valley Forge: Judson, 2013. 978-0817017354. 122 pp., $14.99.

Reviewer: *Russell St. John, Twin Oaks Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO*

The title of this slim volume is misleading. While the author's experience may reside exclusively in black churches, his wisdom is colorblind. There is nothing in this book to restrict it to those who labor in an African-American context, and everything to commend it to all ministers who desire to preach and pastor well in times of grief and loss.

The first half of *Preaching Funerals* offers sage counsel to pastors, guiding them in their preparation of funeral messages, while the second half offers examples of such messages. Though the examples are indeed excellent, Wherry truly shines in his pastoral instructions. Stating that "[t]his book is designed to be a new kind of homiletics text: a guidebook for preaching which seeks to provide both tools and practical application of those tools," Wherry hits his mark, walking the preacher through initial interactions with the mourning family and offering suggestions for sermon structure in funeral

messages (3). Wherry writes from a wealth of pastoral experience, which is clearly melded with a keen mind and a healthy dose of insight into human nature and family dynamics. *Preaching Funerals* makes plain that which may otherwise be confusing or complex.

Consider Wherry's good old-fashioned horse sense when it comes to the initial meeting with a grieving family: "Death can debilitate a family. Death is fraught with difficult and divisive issues. There is planning to be done, and there are persons who fail to carry their weight in that planning. There are bills to be paid, and there are persons who lack resources to meet those obligations. There are also persons who have the resources to meet funeral obligations but refuse. There are insurance policies around which complex beneficiary questions arise. There are overwhelming feelings of grief, anger, and denial, and there is enormous stress related to those feelings. Further, one has no way to know in advance which family members are experiencing which of these feelings" (14). As he offers suggestions for how the preacher can navigate these waters, Wherry recommends that the minister quickly identify the "decision-maker" in the family. When the pastor and decision-maker engage, families tend to experience a sense of relief in knowing that the process of planning, and ultimately of resolution and healing, has begun (23).

A funeral message is not, however, merely a convenient opportunity for "closure," and Wherry challenges preachers to provide theologically grounded comfort to those who mourn. The pastor "must demonstrate an applied, practical facility for making plain the difficult and complex issues of death and dying, the justice and mercy of God, and the eschatological implications of family circles being broken. There is nothing so useless as the fruit of education hanging so high that it cannot be picked from the tree by the hungry, hurting people on the ground" (27). And Wherry understands just what those people need, namely "belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and belief in the bodily resurrection from the dead of those . . . who have faith in him" (31). He therefore reminds preachers that a funeral "sermon" that has for its topic the life of the deceased is no sermon at all. A sermon proclaims Jesus Christ, and a funeral sermon ought especially to do so as a grieving family and community confront the most visible and painful manifestation of sin, death. "A eulogy or funeral sermon is guilty of not doing enough when it fails to connect the hearers to the Good News of the Gospel. Preaching at a funeral is not actually Christian preaching at all if it is simply a maudlin re-telling of the life of the deceased. There must be a connection to biblical themes and to the redemptive love and power of God through Jesus Christ. Without this, a message may be a speech, it may even be an elegy, but it is definitely not a sermon" (54).

Much more can be said to commend *Preaching Funerals in the Black Church*. Suffice it to say that this reader found it valuable, and the present review will conclude with this truth: "Every pastor and preacher at a funeral must herself or himself become an eyewitness to the resurrection of Jesus"

(34). As a preacher testifies as a resurrection witness, he or she proclaims him who alone has overcome death, who alone has power to bring comfort to those who mourn, and who alone will raise to life those who sleep in him on the day of His appearing. Peter Wherry helps preachers to give *that* testimony, and to give it well.

Genesis: A Theological Commentary for Preachers. By Abraham Kuruvilla. Eugene, Oreg.: Resource Publications, 2014. 978-1625641144. 652 pp., $64.00.

Reviewer: *Don Sunukjian, Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, CA*

Abe Kuruvilla has provided us another fine work to help us in our preaching. Following his earlier volumes—*Privilege the Text! A Theological Hermeneutic for Preaching* (Moody, 2009) and *Mark: A Theological Commentary for Preachers* (Cascade, 2012)—this latest contribution is a major theological commentary on the book of Genesis.

Kuruvilla divides the book of Genesis into 35 preaching units, unfolding each unit from "text" to "theology" to "application."

His comments on the "text" show the breadth of scholarship we have come to expect from the author—a bibliography of over 400 books and journal articles, with citations from rabbinic and Jewish writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Greek orators and historians, the church fathers, and other ancient writings. His exegesis is insightful, with careful attention to literary structures (e.g., chiasms), word play, and recurring motifs and key words.

Kuruvilla's major purpose in the commentary is to provide the "theological focus" of each preaching unit, that timeless, eternal truth which serves as the bridge between text and application. These sequential theological foci are not disjointed from each other, but are clearly connected to provide a progressive thematic development of Genesis as the beginning of God's work to bless mankind. It is the week-by-week preaching of these timeless truths that enable individuals to rightly relate themselves to God and grow into Christlikeness.

Then, melding text and theology, Kuruvilla offers two possible preaching outlines for each unit. The final point in each outline is the contemporary "application," written as an imperative, and clearly indicated by means of italics. The outlines are sufficient to structure a message, while leaving the concrete illustrations, stories, and examples up to the individual preacher for his particular audience and context.

Let me give one example from the book of how an interpretive insight leads to and supports a timeless theological truth. Genesis 29:35 records that Leah "stopped having children" after giving birth to four sons. This cessation cannot be due to age or infertility, for she later bears three more children

(30:17-21). What accounts for this gap? Leah's statement in Genesis 30:15 provides the likely answer: Rachel, as part of her malevolent jealousy was not allowing Leah to sleep with Jacob. This highhanded, overbearing behavior, however, does not help Rachel herself to have children—she remains barren. It's only as Rachel ultimately submits to her circumstances, relents of her bitterness, and allows Leah to again sleep with Jacob (30:15) that God remembers her and opens her womb (30:22). This interpretative insight leads to and supports Kuruvilla's theological focus: "Highhandedness precludes God's blessing, but faithful submission to God brings it about" (p. 365).

Obviously, attempting to cover fifty chapters of Genesis in thirty-five preaching units means that some of the units are fairly lengthy, and some of the resulting "theological statements" have multiple segments. Preachers, however, can easily divide these longer sections into more than one sermon, using one of the segments as the main theme for an individual sermon.

This is a thoughtful and valuable commentary, from one who is both adept at exegesis, and in love with preaching.

God willing, Abe hopes to provide us through the years with additional theological commentaries of a similar nature. May God give him good health and long life! [Book Review Editor's note: "He is grateful for the kind sentiment, but not so sure he wants to live all that long!"]

The Homiletical Beat: Why All Sermons are Narrative. Eugene L. Lowry. Nashville: Abingdon, 2012. 978-1426751431. 128 pp., $16.99.

Reviewer: *Timothy S. Warren, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.*

Lowry has continued to develop the notion of preaching as movement through time, expanding on his *The Homiletical Plot* (1980) and *Doing Time in the Pulpit* (1985). Unlike painting, sculpture, and architecture, which are revealed all at once, preaching is more akin to music, drama, and film. Some art, like painting, is expressed in space and all at once. Preaching, like music, is expressed in temporal sequence, over time. It is because of this narrative sequencing, with intervening moments one after another, that all preaching should be considered narrative preaching. "Presentations whose form is lined out *moment-by-moment* are narrative by definition" (3). A sermon reveals itself sequentially, word by word, sentence by sentence. A line is spoken. Then it is gone before another line is heard, and gone. In time the entire sermon has been revealed and experienced.

The author acknowledges his debt to H. Grady Davis's *Design for Preaching* (1954). He admits that, "It has taken me a lifetime to even begin to absorb what Davis means," when he says, "A sermon is a continuity of sounds, looks, gestures which follow one another in time" (7). Sermons are narrative because their form is, like music, beat-by-beat or word-by-word,

in sequence. Lowry then wonders why the dynamic form of narrative, contrasted to the static of once-for-all forms, plays such a small role in preaching pedagogy and practice. He believes it is because narrative, the broader form, has so often been reduced to story, which is only one of several forms narrative may take.

After a brief introductory chapter, three major chapters follow. Chapter Two addresses the three levels of narrativity: narrative as temporal modality, i.e., its form; narrative's strategic aim, i.e., employing tension/resolution and causative/evocative/ provocative language; and narrative as embodied form, i.e., the nuancing of the five stages of the homiletical plot ("oops," "ugh," "aha," "whee," and "yeah") and episodal movement. Chapter Three revisits the author's Lyman Beecher and William Self Lectures presented at Yale and Mercer/McAfee, during which he illustrated the principles of narrativity in an autobiographical and musical journey through well-known hymns. Chapter Four deals with orality, reminding the reader that preaching is a "mouth-to-ear communication, not hand to eye" (75). The oral sequencing of the preached sermon allows the listener to experience and begin to respond to the message in progress. Preachers who value transformed imaginations over information retention will take the oral nature of narrativity into account during preparation as well as presentation.

Lowry makes reference to a host of authors who have written on the subject of narrative preaching over the last six decades. Readers acquainted with those established homileticians will appreciate this text more than those who have not followed the development of narrative preaching. Still, even as an introduction to the subject, this text is a must read for every preacher and teacher of preaching—except for, beginning on page eighty-nine, the author's tirade over the deficiencies of lectionary texts, which most *JEHS* readers will find irrelevant—because it will familiarize them to the key names and texts that have contributed to the narrative preaching conversation over the last four decades.

Preaching the Four Gospels with Confidence. By Steven D. Mathewson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013. 978-1598567021. 181 pp., $14.95.
Preaching the Hard Words of Jesus. By Steven D. Mathewson. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013. 978-1619701014. 179 pp., $14.95.

Reviewer: *Sawyer Nyquist, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX.*

Steven Mathewson, Senior Pastor of Evangelical Free Church of Libertyville IL, has both taught and practiced the art of preaching for over two decades. These two popular level volumes are part of *The Preacher's Toolbox* series edited by Craig Brian Larson. Mathewson's project began as a single book about preaching the Gospels but grew into two volumes; they are

based on sixteen different challenges preachers face in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each topic, selected from Mathewson's experience, aims to provide practical tools for the preacher.

The first book, *Preaching the Four Gospels with Confidence*, tackles general problems pastors face when they preach the Gospels. Mathewson begins by addressing the practical issue of selecting text size and series length when working through long books like the Gospels. He takes time next to analyze theological issues preachers might encounter, such as reconciling Jesus' and Paul's theology (chapter 2), how to understand Jesus' interaction with demons (chapter 5), and how to derive accurate application (chapter 6). Other chapters engage historical and theological issues related to the text. For example, chapter 4 attempts to resolve the synoptic differences, and the final chapter handles the potential threat of the Gnostic gospels. The third chapter, the strongest in the book, addresses the popular ways preachers misunderstand (and misuse) cultural backgrounds of the text. Working to correct these errors he describes methodical steps for approaching contextual issues.

In *Preaching the Hard Words of Jesus*, the second volume reviewed here, Mathewson focuses on the red letters of the Gospels that frustrate readers and preachers. Once again, the selection of the nine subjects stems from a desire to help pastors deal with the difficult parts of Jesus' teaching. Apparent racial slurs (chapter 1), overly extreme expectations for discipleship (chapter 2), uncomfortable discussion about marriage and sex (chapter 3), tough words about hell and judgment (chapter 4), and harsh rebukes to Pharisees (chapter 9) are a few of the difficult topics addressed. Besides dealing with these, Mathewson also handles confusing subjects like eschatology (chapter 5), sovereignty and free will (chapter 6), the Mosaic law (chapter 7), and the relationship between prayer and miracles (chapter 8). Rather than running away from what Jesus has said, Mathewson embraces these texts in order to "understand them truly and proclaim them clearly" (5). He aims to help preachers be clear rather than clever in their treatment of Jesus' words.

The selection of issues and the depth with which they are treated will aid each pastor differently. A young pastor may find the practical concerns more helpful, while the veteran preacher, with seminary further in his past, might benefit more from the engagement with scholarly works. On the whole, the series title fits these books well. Mathewson gears each chapter toward providing tools and resources to equip pastors. Topic by topic he takes readers on a tour of his office bookshelves, pointing out valuable books and annotating each recommendation. The reader quickly learns that Mathewson labors in the field of academia and church ministry and he balances the two crafts well. Over twenty-five years of both ministry experience and preaching through all four Gospels have prepared him to write these books. Every sermon manifests the same tension regarding what to include, what to explain, and what to apply. Mathewson is familiar with these problems and he guides his readers through handling the struggle.

The author by no means offers new solutions to these scholarly problems, but instead relies heavily on commentaries and other scholarly works. His conclusions match summations from current works, and while he introduces the relevant concerns and questions, the engagement with the field is somewhat limited. The same names consistently show up throughout the volumes and are cited as authorities on nearly every topic. A pastor looking for substantial and broad dialogue with the exegetical or theological issues presented in this book would be better aided by consulting them and other works directly. The true value of Mathewson's writing comes not from scholarly answers but from his experience in making pastoral and homiletical decisions in relation to these problems.

Preacher's Toolbox and Steven Mathewson provide exactly what they promise: tools. From book recommendations, to sermon outlines and applications, a preacher gains needed equipment in these volumes. The tips and tactics Mathewson has gleaned from experience will aid any pastor planning a journey through the gospels.

The Art of Preaching: Five Medieval Texts and Translations. Siegfried Wenzel. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2013. 978-0813221373. 267 pp., $64.95.

Reviewer: *Timothy S. Warren, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, TX*

Siegfried Wenzel has long served as professor of English at the Universities of Pennsylvania and North Carolina with special interests in medieval literature and religion. He has here edited and translated from Latin five *artes praedicandi* or technical preaching manuals from the late-medieval period (thirteenth-fifteenth centuries). Out of some two-hundred forty of these extant Latin texts, only ten percent have been edited and many still await translation into English. In five chapters Wenzel provides an introduction to each text and/or its author (three of the texts are anonymous), an outline of the treatise, the sources for editing and translating, an edited Latin text, and a side-by-side English translation.

This work is important and fascinating. It is important because it provides insight into the teaching and practice of preaching as it was implemented in the context of major universities like Oxford and Paris during a time of hearty scholasticism. Although the manuals are brief, they present in an orderly fashion the crucial elements of a scholastic sermon and provide illustrations of what those elements should look like. Wenzel notes that, "While medieval *artes praedicandi*, on the whole, are remarkably uniform in teaching the basics, they also show signs of innovation, of an ongoing development" (xiii).

This work is fascinating because it demonstrates how many of our

present homiletical practices reflect the same principles taught in these five-hundred year-old manuals. Summarizing much of the detailed instruction found in this volume, Wenzel identifies three major components of a scholastic sermon. First, the sermon theme was to be based on a biblical text. Usually the length of the text would be brief, though the sermon's development would rely on multiple biblical quotations and allusions. The manner in which the text was interpreted could be varied, including literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical (with allusions to the afterlife), yet not "contrary to the meaning it has in Scripture" (23). Second, scholastic sermons developed their themes into highly detailed logical structures and coherent divisions. Since every statement was to be fully validated, a meticulous "organic connectedness appears not only between thema and general development but show up in minor and even the most minute connections" (244). Third, the sermon was to be rhetorically beautiful and elegant in the arrangement of the sermon as well as in style (119) and story (159).

Unless one is seriously researching the subject matter of this text, the cost may be prohibitive for most personal libraries. However, its significance for research, both in its content and in its approach, argues for its inclusion in institutional collections.

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society

History:

The Evangelical Homiletics Society (EHS) convened its inaugural meeting in October of 1997, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA, at the initiative of Drs. Scott M. Gibson of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Keith Willhite of Dallas Theological Seminary. Professors Gibson and Willhite desired an academic society for the exchange of ideas related to instruction of biblical preaching.

Specifically, the EHS was formed to advance the cause of Biblical Preaching through:

> promotion of a biblical-theological approach to preaching increased competence for teachers of preaching integration of the fields of communication, biblical studies, and theology scholarly contributions to the field of homiletics

The EHS membership consists primarily of homiletics professors from North American seminaries and Bible Colleges who hold to evangelical theology, and thus treat preaching as the preaching of God's inspired Word. The EHS doctrinal statement is that of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Purpose:

The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is designed to engage readers with articles dealing with the best research and expertise in preaching. Readers will be introduced to literature in the field of homiletics or related fields with book reviews. Since the target audience of the journal is scholars/practitioners, a sermon will appear in each edition which underscores the commitment of the journal to the practice of preaching.

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The vision of the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is to provide academics and practitioners with a journal that informs and equips readers to become competent teachers of preaching and excellent preachers.

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The Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society is published twice a year: March and September.

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Articles submitted to the Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society are blind juried by members of the Editorial Board. In addition, the General Editor may ask a scholar who is a specialist to jury particular articles. The General Editor may seek articles for publication from qualified scholars. The General Editor makes the final publication decisions. It is always the General Editor's prerogative to edit and shorten said material, if necessary.

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   a. From a book:

   note: 23. John Dewey, The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus (Ann Arbor, 1894), 104.

   b. From a periodical:

   note: 5. Frederick Barthelme, "Architecture," Kansas Quarterly 13:3 (September 1981): 77-78.

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   Dewey 111.

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Manuscripts should be sent to the attention of the General Editor. Send as an email attachment to the General. Send to: sgibson@gcts.edu

Address correspondence to Scott M. Gibson, General Editor, Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society, 130 Essex Street, South Hamilton, MA 01982.

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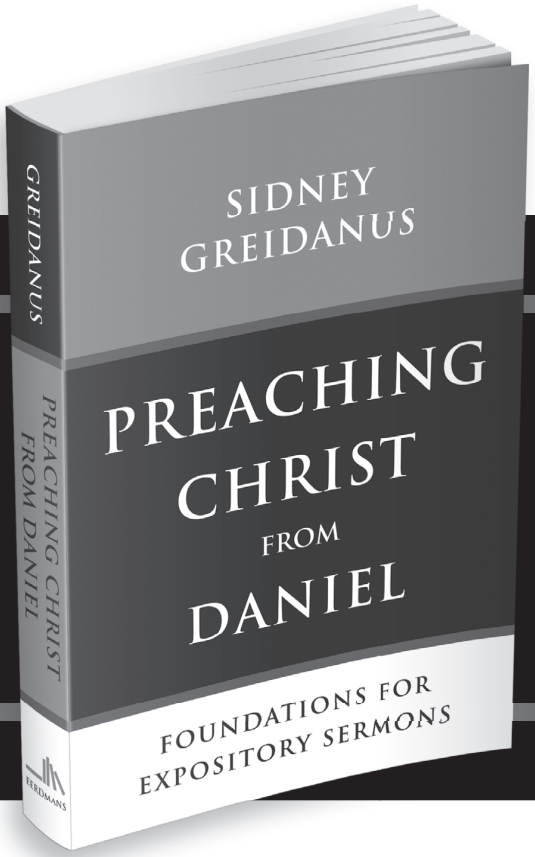

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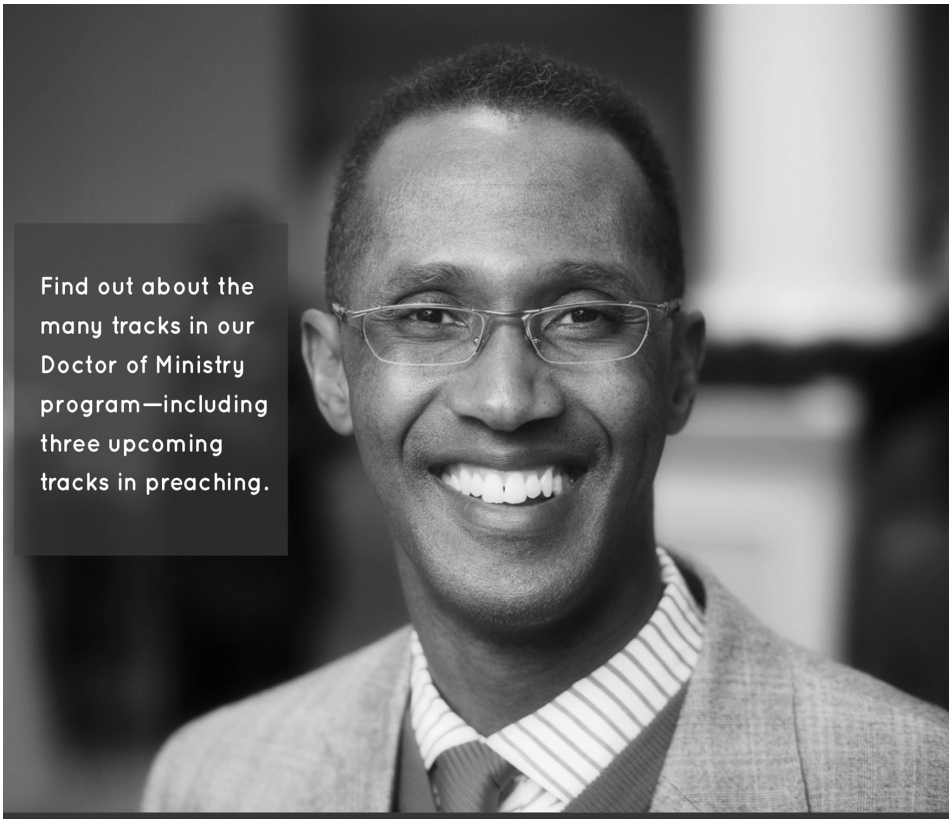

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